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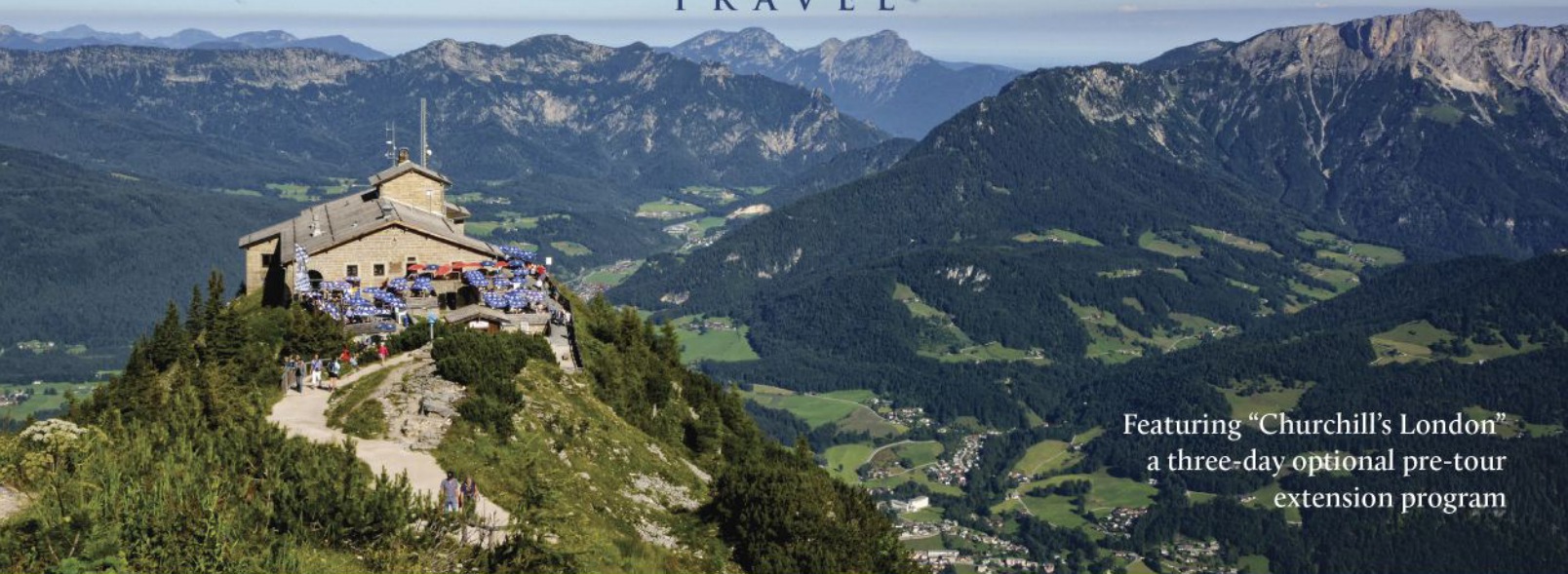
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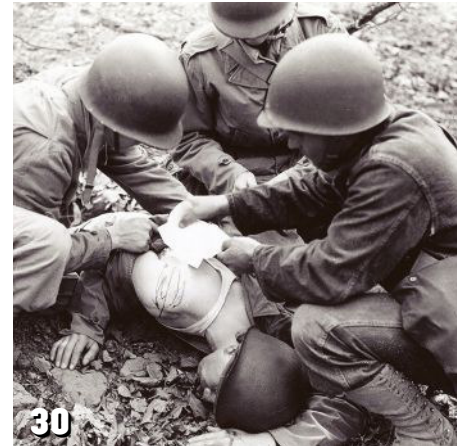
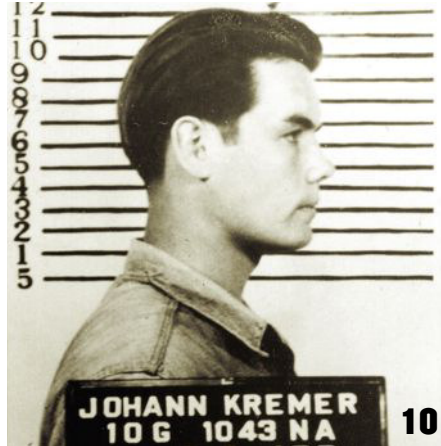
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# AMERICA IN WWII

The War • The Home Front • The People  
February 2018, Volume Thirteen, Number Five



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**COVER SHOT:** *It wasn't his dream job, but Lieutenant General Jacob Devers still smiled for the camera as he took command of US Army forces in North Africa, in Algeria, in early 1944. What he wanted was to command an army group. He got his wish in summer 1944, but hit a serious obstacle: General Dwight Eisenhower despised him and wouldn't let him succeed, even when it could have shortened the war.* NATIONAL ARCHIVES

# AMERICA IN WWII

The War • The Home Front • The People

January-February 2018  
Volume Thirteen • Number Five  
www.AmericaInWWII.com

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## A Publication of 310 PUBLISHING, LLC

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AMERICA IN WWII (ISSN 1554-5296) is published bimonthly by 310 Publishing LLC, 4711 Queen Avenue, Suite 202, Harrisburg, PA 17109. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, PA, and additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year (six issues) \$41.94; outside the U.S., \$53.94 in U.S. funds. Customer service: call toll-free 866-525-1945 (U.S. & Canada), or write AMERICA IN WWII, P.O. Box 421945, Palm Coast, FL 32142, or visit online at www.americainwwii.com.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO AMERICA IN WWII, P.O. BOX 421945, PALM COAST, FL 32142.

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PRINTED IN THE USA BY QUAD/GRAPHICS  
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WAS HERE

## Prisoners of Circumstance

I WAS 14 WHEN WE MOVED FROM PHILADELPHIA to a rural stretch of the suburbs where Pennsylvania's largest maximum-security prison, Graterford, loomed within walking distance. By mentioning "walking distance," I mean to emphasize that the men locked up there, some of whom had shot, stabbed, strangled, or beat victims to death, could potentially escape and travel on foot to our door. And why wouldn't they do exactly that for a place to hide out overnight? There were no city police here cruising the streets to keep an eye out for suspicious activity. And once the sun went down, a heavy veil of darkness settled. There were no streetlights like those in the city that softened the deepest shadows.

One day soon after we'd moved in, one of my friends, Lester, came out to visit from the old neighborhood. A cousin of mine was visiting, too, and the three of us were outside tossing around a football as the sky grew dark. Mid-spiral, a siren suddenly went off. Lester started quivering: "What is that? What's going on? Did a prisoner escape? A prisoner escaped!" I might not have noticed the racket at all if not for this infectious hysteria. My cousin and I managed to keep our cool by laughing away our anxiety as Lester ran inside, screaming all the way, and hid in a closet.

I wonder how Lester would have felt in Phoenix, Arizona, on Christmas Eve 1944 when the news broke that two dozen German POWs had escaped their prison outside the city. These were men who had sworn allegiance to Adolf Hitler. They had killed Americans in combat. They had refused to give an inch under questioning by agents trained to extract information from the most stubborn enemy loyalists.

Chris Warner tells the story of Camp Papago and its U-boater inmates on page 10 in this issue. If the events weren't well-documented history, you'd think they were invented for a *Hogan's Heroes* episode. Prisoners confined to a camp that resembled a country club convince the warden to let them build a volleyball court—so they have a place to disperse the dirt they're unearthing to complete an underground tunnel. Men walk into the showers only to slip through a panel in the wall and down into the ground to do their daily digging. Fresh laundry hangs on a line to dry in just the right spot to block the view from a guard tower.

Back at Graterford Prison, it turned out that the siren blaring into the countryside was not a warning that a mass murderer was loose. It was just a firehouse siren, beckoning the local volunteers to action. We didn't have that in the city, where firefighting was a full-time job and the firemen did tasks around the station all day until it was time to jump on their trucks and answer a call.

But you'd already figured out that we were just naïve kids in an unfamiliar situation getting scared about being scared—hysteria. There was some hysteria in Phoenix, too. But there the fear was justified. I'll let you read Chris Warner's article to see how the ending of *that* story turns out.

Carl Zebrowski  
Editor, America in WWII



# HONORING THE MEN AND WOMEN OF WORLD WAR II



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## MORE LÉOPOLDVILLE MEN

FOLLOWING UP ON “Luckier than We Realized” in your December 2017 issue’s War Stories section:

My former landlady’s first husband was on the SS *Léopoldville* when it was torpedoed on Christmas Eve 1944. Her husband, Marshall, was in the 66th Infantry Division and shipped out for Cherbourg, France, along with a guy he grew up with in Fort Collins, Colorado. When the *Léopoldville* was torpedoed they ended up close together in the water, and his friend was eaten by a shark. Of course, that stayed with Marshall until his death in 1999. He was injured and sent back to England for several months, then re-shipped to Marseilles in March 1945.

Marshall fought his way to Austria on foot. Along the way he found a small government-issued bible with steel covers that had a name and town inside the front cover. He carried it in his left shirt pocket. After his death, his widow showed it to a daughter-in-law, who started tracking down the owner. She got a hit in Missouri. She called, only to learn that the bible’s owner had died several years before, so she sent the bible to his family.

By coincidence, I had a friend whose father was an airborne trooper who was also aboard the *Léopoldville*. I put him and Marshall in contact, and they chatted a few times on the phone (both lived in Denver), but Marshall died before they could meet. My friend’s father has since also passed on. He said he was under orders not to tell what happened, but then along came the Internet and it all came out from various former soldiers.

RODNEY J. JOHNSON JR.  
San Antonio, Texas

## DAD’S STORY, DAD’S VALUES

THANK YOU SO MUCH for publishing my dad’s story [I Was There, “Of Rabbits and Stormtroopers,” by the late Lloyd T. Howard, October 2017]. He was truly an exceptional man and lived long enough to teach us all about honor, patriotism, love,

respect, and so much more. His values were “caught” by all who knew and loved him. We are so happy you were able to capture his story in such a well-put-together article.

JUDY PFENDER  
daughter of Lloyd T. Howard,  
wartime private first class,  
106th Infantry Division, and POW  
Bellevue, Nebraska

## AIRPLANE JUMBLE

IN THE ARTICLE “One Family’s Warbird Museum” [Landings, October 2017], I believe there are two significant mistakes. First, no D-Day glider carried 155 soldiers, as claimed.

Second, the “In a Nutshell” summary on page 11 states that the museum’s B-25 flew on the April 1942 Doolittle Raid. Impossible. Of the 16 bombers that participated, 15 crash-landed or were destroyed when their crews bailed out over China. The other Doolittle Mitchell was confiscated by the Russians when the crew landed near Vladivostok and were interned.

JAMES B. WALKER  
master sergeant, US Air Force (retired)  
Dayton, Ohio

**Editor’s note:** *The Fagen Fighters Museum website notes that the CG-4A glider could carry any one of these cargoes: “13 troops in battle gear; jeep; jeep trailer; 75mm howitzer; 37mm anti-tank gun; small bulldozer and operator.” As for the museum’s B-25, Paper Doll, it flew with the 447th Bomb Squadron of the 321st Bomb Group, out of Solenzara, Corsica.*

## DON’T SMOKE ‘EM!

AS A JUST-RENEWED SUBSCRIBER, I strongly object to your magazine including old cigarette ads [Flashback, featuring period advertisements].

In the April/May 2017 issue, a former big-name athlete, Joe DiMaggio, endorses Camels, with 28 percent less nicotine claimed. When I looked up DiMaggio’s life on Wikipedia, it states that he was a heavy cigarette smoker for many years. He died

from lung cancer at age 84.

None of the cigarettes ads you publish contains any health warnings about smoking (not required until the 1960s). The Chesterfield ad in the October/November 2016 issue shows a soldier smoking a cigarette and states, “Our fighting men rate the best.... See that they get plenty of milder cooler-smoking Chesterfields.” Millions of soldiers became addicted to nicotine as a result of being given free cigarettes by tobacco companies.

Please refrain from publishing any more old tobacco ads in your future magazines. Smoking kills almost 500,000 each year in the United States, plus disables millions.

DICK HEBEL  
New Palestine, Indiana

**Editor’s note:** *We don’t encourage tobacco use, but tobacco use was an important part of 1940s culture. The ads and the art created for them, the shocking health claims made in those ads, and the acceptance of the tobacco industry and its products as parts of normal life all constitute important parts of the era’s material and popular culture. So, just as we can’t exclude other difficult realities of WWII history, neither can we leave out tobacco and smoking. Our Flashbacks aren’t advertisements; they’re artifacts.*

## GREMLINS

**October 2017:** Landings, “One Family’s Warbird Museum”—North American, not Northrop (as stated in the first caption), developed the P-51 Mustang fighter.

War Stories, “Beginning of the End, Part I”—General Hideki Tojo was not Japan’s emperor; by August 1945, he was Japan’s former prime minister.

I Was There, “Of Rabbits and Stormtroopers”—A “C.P. pillbox” was a command post pillbox, not a circular pillbox.

Send us your comments and reactions—especially the favorable ones! Mail them to V-Mail, America in WWII, 4711 Queen Avenue, Suite 202, Harrisburg, PA 17109, or e-mail them to [editor@americainwwii.com](mailto:editor@americainwwii.com).





LIVES REMEMBERED ARE NEVER LOST

STEPHEN AMBROSE

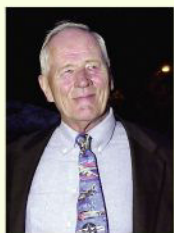


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# Lone Dove

by Carl Zebrowski

**A**mericans might have been surprised when Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin voted against the most straightforward decision on war in the nation's history, but they shouldn't have been shocked. 1941 wasn't the first time the iconoclastic representative from Montana had opposed the United States' joining a world war. She'd also cast an official nay vote for the first.

Jeanette Rankin arrived in Washington in 1917 after winning election in Montana to the US House of Representatives—the first woman ever elected to either chamber on Capitol Hill. She went there as a member of the Grand Old Party, which may have seemed an unlikely political base for a 30-something ardent foe of war and advocate for women's rights. She herself saw no conflict. "I have always been a Republican, for the same reason that most people are either Democrats or Republicans—because their fathers were one or the other," she later said. "Frankly, I cannot see a particle of difference between the two."

So it was that this daughter of a wealthy developer and graduate of the New York School of Philanthropy (later the Columbia School of Social Work) earned a vote on US laws three years before the 19th Amendment would ensure that women nationwide could not be denied the right to vote in elections on the basis of their gender. One of Rankin's biggest legislative decisions was her response to the question of whether the United States should join the First World War against Germany in April 1917. She said no. "I want to stand by my country," she said, "but I cannot vote for war."

Rankin's dissent, one of only 50 tallies on the no side, was not widely appreciated. When the time for reelection came in 1918, Rankin found that a game of political



In the US House chamber, Representative Jeannette Rankin of Montana appears unmoved by an attempt to change her mind on the vote to declare war on Japan.

musical chairs had gerrymandered her out of her seat. She ran for the Senate instead, as an independent, but lost. "I'd go through much worse treatment," she said. "If you know a certain thing is right, you can't change it."

Rankin left Washington and bought an off-the-grid farmette in Georgia. She spent much of the next couple of decades lobbying for women's causes and against increased military power and spending. "America has the war habit," she said. "It is a habit we must break before we are broken by it."

Then an acquisitive and egomaniacal Adolf Hitler sparked another war in Europe. Rankin's antiwar resolve was being tested again, and she ran again as a Republican for one of Montana's seats in the House in 1940. Campaigning on the slogan "Prepare to the limit for defense; keep our men out of Europe," she won.

When the war arrived on American soil in Hawaii, President Franklin Roosevelt gave a moving speech to the nation about

uniting against the attackers from the East, and Congress voted on a declaration of war against Japan. As Rankin had done some 25 years earlier, she voted no. This time her vote was the lone nay in both houses of Congress.

Three days later Rankin's name was called for another war vote, on whether to declare against Germany and Italy. Her voice cut through with a simple "Present." Asked later about the puzzling abstention, Rankin said: "What good would it have done to vote 'no'? We were already at war against Japan. F.D.R. had what he wanted—war. He wanted to be a war President. Everything he did from the day he first took office pointed to the fact that he wanted to fight Germany."


Fellow lawmakers shunned Rankin after her continued antiwar stance. The press stopped paying attention to her. When she appeared in public, crowd members booed and hissed. Even America Firsters, who had passionately fought to keep out of the global fight, wrote her off. Her political career was over.

Though Rankin never returned to political office, she kept up her public struggle against war for the rest of her life. In 1968 she led 5,000 women on a march on Washington, DC, to protest the Vietnam War. "They all said that would be the last anyone would hear of me," she said of her vote against America fighting in World War II. "I have never stopped working for peace and I never will."

Rankin also kept up in her struggle for women's rights, even as she sometimes shook her head in dismay at those who ostensibly would benefit from her crusade. "They've been worms," she said. "They let their sons go off to war because they're afraid their husbands will lose their jobs in industry if they protest." ★

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS





MARY ANDERSON HAD A KNACK for being in films for which other actresses took home Oscars: *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Song of Bernadette* (1943), and *To Each His Own* (1946). But to say she was “always the bridesmaid, never the bride” would be to sell her short. She was no wallflower. In fact, at Alabama’s Howard College, where director George Cukor discovered her, she was named the class of 1939’s “most glamorous girl.”

Cukor’s ouster as director of *Gone with the Wind* mixed Anderson’s chance to play Scarlett O’Hara, but the native Alabamian embraced the role of Southern belle Maybelle Merriwether. Later she played an army nurse in Alfred Hitchcock’s WWII classic *Lifeboat* (1944), set at sea after a ship is torpedoed.

Anderson got the chance to appear with her brother, James Anderson, in the film noir *Hunt the Man Down* (1950). Meanwhile, she was moving increasingly into TV roles, retiring in the mid-1960s.

Before her death in 2014, Anderson was one of *Gone with the Wind*’s last surviving actors.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.DOCTORMACRO.COM

AMERICA IN  
**WWII**

PINUP

*Mary Anderson*

# Shipshape Landing Ship

by Robert Gabrick



The landing ship, tank, *LST-325* is ready for visitors to board at its homeport in Evansville, Indiana.

**A**CROSS THE NATION, Americans turned on their radios in the evening of December 29, 1940, to listen to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. “My friends,” he began, “this is not a Fireside Chat on war. It is a talk on national security.” Ominously, he declared, “Not since Jamestown and Plymouth Rock has our American civilization been in such danger as now.” Europe needed help fighting Nazi aggression, he said, and America would supply it by becoming “the great arsenal of democracy.”

Much is made of America’s miracle of production. But it’s one thing to manufacture supplies and equipment and another to get them to the troops. It’s the combination of the two that led America to victory in World War II. The US Merchant Marine delivered cargo loads from port to port. From there, the cargo went to the front—from ports to beachheads. That part of the journey was made by landing ships.

One type of these landing ships, developed during World War II, was the landing

ship, tank, better known as the LST. Essential to ship-to-shore amphibious warfare operations in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Mediterranean, an LST could carry 33-ton Sherman tanks, motorized vehicles, landing craft, a variety of supplies, and troops. It featured a specially designed hull with a flat bottom that allowed for its bow to be run onto a beach. Then the doors on the tall and blunt bow were swung open and a steel ramp was lowered onto the beach for unloading without the aid of cranes and piers.

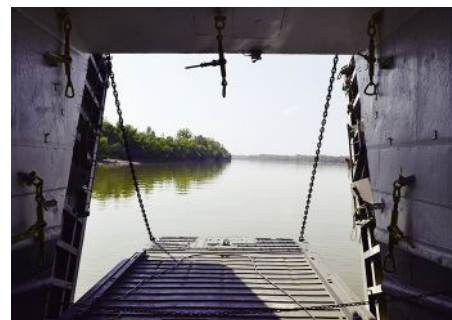
*LST-325*, one of the more than 1,000 LSTs produced in the United States during the war, was constructed in the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, one of 16 shipyards that constructed LSTs for WWII service. Established in 1801 and initially known simply as “the Navy Yard,” this facility was the first naval shipyard in the United States. In the 1860s it was relocated from its original site on the west bank of the Delaware River out onto League Island and was acquired by the federal government. Beginning with the Spanish-Amer-

ican War and continuing into World War I, the yard developed into a major production facility. It reached its peak during World War II, employing 40,000 to 60,000 people and boasting its own sports teams, bands, and newspaper.

LSTs were produced quickly during the war, and the 328-foot-long 50-foot-wide *LST-325* was laid down on August 10, 1942; launched on October 27; and commissioned on February 1, 1943. Powered by two 900-horsepower General Motors V-12 diesel engines, it supplied American and British forces during the early-war North Africa campaign; the July 9–15, 1943, occupation of Sicily; the September 14, 1943, landings at Salerno, Italy; and the Normandy invasion, which began on June 6, 1944. The ship earned two Battle Stars for her service.

*LST-325* did duty in the Korean War, was transferred to Greece in 1964, and left active service in the late 1990s. USS LST Memorial acquired her in 2000, and she sailed to Mobile, Alabama, from Greece in





Clockwise from above, left: one of *LST-325*'s 40mm Bofors guns; the ship's bow doors are open and its ramp is lowered for a view of the Ohio River; the troop berths on the second deck accommodated non-crew GIs being transported on the ship.

December of that year, manned by a crew of 29. Later moved to Evansville, Indiana, she became a museum in 2004.

*LST-325*'s current location is significant. Evansville, located on the Ohio River, was home to one of the six "cornfield shipyards," so named due to their inland location, mostly in agricultural areas, including in Seneca, Illinois, and Jeffersonville, Indiana, as well as in Pittsburgh, Neville Island, and Ambridge in Pennsylvania. The cornfield shipyards manufactured 718 ships. The Evansville yard, operated by the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company, earned the Army-Navy "E" Award for excellence in production, presented in a ceremony on Sunday, November 28, 1943. Only five percent of all war plants received "E" Awards.

The Evansville Shipyard operated from 1942 to 1945. The *Evansville Press* reviewed the history of the facility in 1966 and reported that it had employed up to 20,000 workers, including about 2,000 women. Most were welders. The article noted that

these employees had almost no previous experience in welding, so "virtually every ship worker had to be trained on the spot." It went on to say "the Bureau of Ships had expected to get the LSTs from Evansville at the rate of about 20 a year. When the yard got rolling it started building seven at a time, and in one period launched 20 ships in 60 days." The three-year tally was 202.

A visit to the unusual historic site that the Evansville Shipyard has become is no mere museum walk; it's a guided tour through an operational warship. On the main deck, visitors explore the bridge, deck house, officers' quarters, gallery, and the conning station, with its 40mm Bofors guns that provided protection against enemy aircraft attack. A 6x6 cargo truck sits on the freight elevator, which lowered cargo into the nearly football-length third deck. During the war the main deck was filled with cargo. Adjacent to the elevator on the second deck, a door provides access to troop-berthing areas and crew quarters.

My late-summer visit with outdoor temperatures in the 80s meant the non-airconditioned interior was hot—a condition troops and crew members would also have endured, under less pleasant circumstances.

The cavernous third deck, extending almost the entire length of the ship except for the steering engine room at the rear, was for cargo storage. With the huge bow doors open, visitors can walk up a portion of the ramp once used for unloading the tanks, motor vehicles, and supplies. Alongside the ramp are various shop areas filled with tools and machines used to service the ship. There are also displays and exhibits, including a model of the ship, a tribute to the women who worked in the shipyard, armaments, and radar equipment. Stretchers represent *LST-325*'s role as a hospital ship. Its cargo deck, empty after a delivery was made, could be filled with combat casualties on trips back to port.

*LST-325* was both a product of the arsenal of democracy and a vital part of its operation. It survives here in Evansville as a physical reminder of the many Americans, civilian and military, who made victory in the war possible. ★

ROBERT GABRICK, a contributing editor of *America in WWII*, is a frequent traveler who writes many Landings pieces for the magazine.

## IN A NUTSHELL

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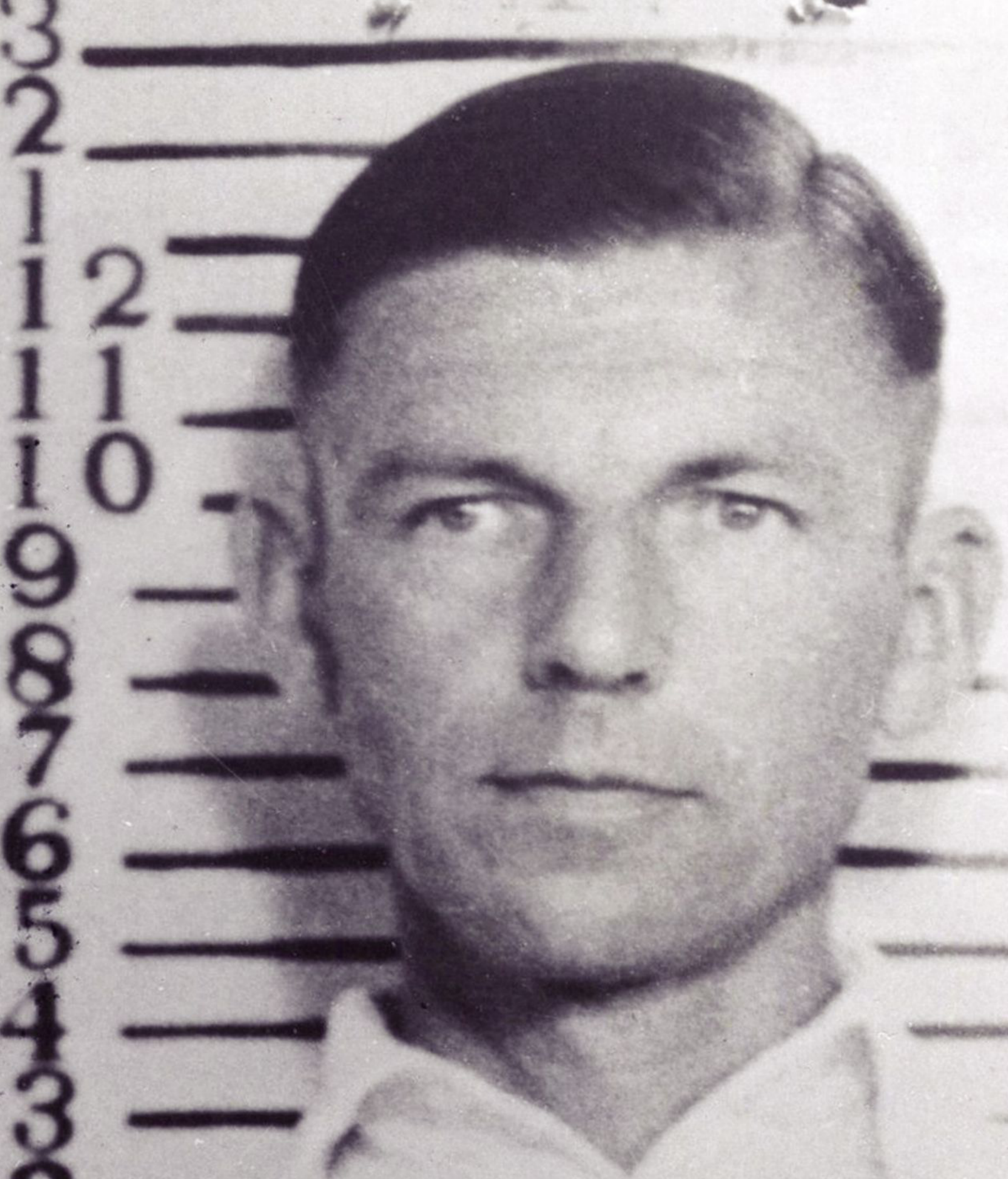
A black and white profile photograph of a man with short, dark hair, looking to the right. He is positioned in front of a height measurement chart with horizontal lines. The image has a grainy, historical quality.

# NAZIS ON THE MESA

Christmas Eve 1944 brought terrifying tidings to Phoenix, Arizona: some of the most fearsome POWs on American soil had tunneled out of their nearby prison.

by Christopher Warner





Background: Forty-three years old in 1944, Jürgen Wattenberg was the oldest U-boat captain in the German navy. His age and comportment brought him the full respect of the POWs under his command in Camp Papago near Phoenix, Arizona.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

# T NAZIS ON THE MESA by Christopher Warner

TWO DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS 1944, as a beleaguered German army trudged through the snow near Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge, a delicate rain began falling 5,000 miles away in the Arizona desert. There, under the cover of darkness, a couple dozen German POWs led by battle-hardened U-boat commanders escaped prison through a tunnel they had dug. Authorities sent out the FBI, bounty hunters, bloodhounds, and Native American scouts. Arizona was witnessing the largest manhunt in its history.

Among the escapees were some of the most notorious Nazis in Allied captivity. Their leader, and the mastermind of the escape plan, was Captain at Sea Jürgen Wattenberg. This tall, stoic 43-year-old had only a brief stint as a U-boat commander before being captured, but he sank 14 Allied ships. US officials had long suspected he would try to escape prison, possibly with the help of pro-Axis operatives in Mexico and South America. The suspicion didn't inspire many precautions, however, and now Wattenberg and his comrades were on the loose.

Camp Papago Park, on the outskirts of Phoenix, took its name from the regional indigenous tribe Tohono O'odham ("Desert People"), also known as the Papago. The camp had originally been designated an army training center but eventually was made part of a massive national network of more than 500 POW camps set mostly in rural areas throughout the country. The 3,000-acre facility was well chosen for its newer purpose, situated in a harsh Sonoran expanse where the extreme conditions and population of venomous creatures presented as much a deterrent to escape as did the staff of 300 armed guards.

Wattenberg was a prisoner of considerable importance, according to reports from the Office of Naval Intelligence. Shortly after his capture, officials at Fort Hunt, an interrogation facility near Washington, DC, had found him to be popular among his men and "strongly pro-Nazi," defiantly invoking his Geneva Convention rights to refuse cooperation with his captors. They noted that the conning tower of his sub, *U-162*, displayed a grey shield and a black sword pointing upward, the same design that appeared on the title page of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

Beginning in January 1944, army brass transferred several thousand German POWs to Camp Papago as the flow of Axis prisoners to the States increased. The camp became known as Alcatraz in the Desert as its inmate roll call turned into a Who's Who of renegades and escape artists from other lockups, each hell-bent on making his stay in Arizona a short one. Wattenberg complemented an impressive roster of well-decorated U-Boat commanders highlighted by Captain Lieutenant Friedrich "Fritz" Guggenberger, recipient of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, Germany's highest military award. Prior to capture in June 1943, Guggenberger had sunk 17 Allied ships and was honored in a lavish ceremony in Germany that Hitler personally attended.

At Papago, unlike at most POW camps, inmates were not required to work. Those who did work earned 81 cents per day in scrip that they could use to purchase items from the canteen, such as beer and sandwiches. These men provided much-needed manpower for local farms and helped to process 90 percent of the region's cotton.

In spite of the camp's reputation as a destination for difficult POWs, its environment was lax, in some ways like a country club. Horseback riding, swimming, and movie screenings counted among the amenities. Homemade stills turned pilfered pickings from the

area's abundant citrus groves into a steady supply of schnapps. Prisoners even enjoyed the attentions of

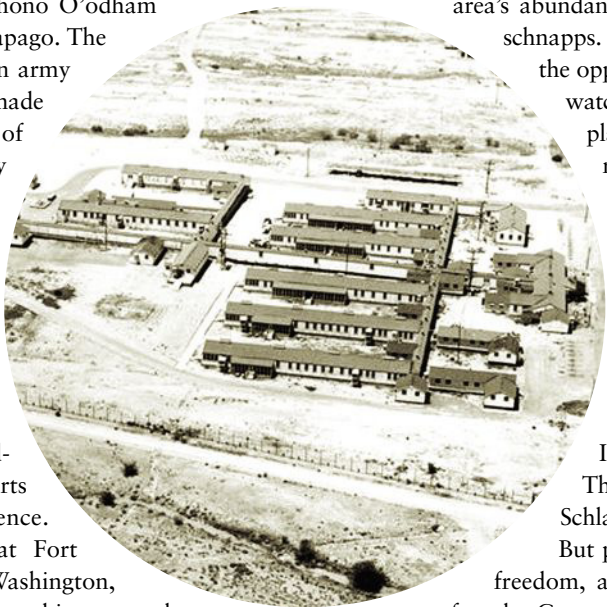
the opposite sex; local women would gather to watch the well-muscled foreigners toil and play in the hot sun. (One of the guards recalled, "They would tease the POWs by sunbathing..., which was just asking for trouble.") In the book *PW: First-Person Accounts of German Prisoners of War in Arizona*, author Steve Hoza sums up the prisoners' relatively lucky situation: "They were grateful..., and treated so well. German POWs in Russia had a death rate of 53 percent. In America, it was less than 1 percent."

The prisoners dubbed their desert oasis *Schlaraffenland*—"land of milk and honey."

But pleasant captivity was no substitute for freedom, and planning for escape began shortly after the Germans' arrival, with the aid of an unlikely

source. The camp's new commander, Colonel William S. Holden, had recently implemented a policy that was the first of several critical blunders in his short tenure. Hoping to contain the influence that the most incorrigible, escape-prone inmates had on the others, Holden quarantined them all in the same barracks, designated Compound 1-A. In doing so, he unwittingly established a 24-7 prisoner think tank with the singular focus of escape. 1-A also happened to be situated in a blind spot of the nearest guard tower. Captain Cecil Parshall, the camp's provost marshal, pointed that problem out, but Holden made no changes.

There in 1-A the short-tempered Captain Lieutenant Jürgen Quaet-Faslem spent most of his days brooding and plotting a breakout. In the book *The Faustball Tunnel*, author John Hammond Moore writes that Quaet-Faslem came up with the idea to build a volleyball court as an excuse to redistribute dirt—dirt unearthed from a tunneling effort. Holden approved the use of shovels and rakes for the project.



COURTESY OF THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC



Digging began in early September 1944 with Wattenberg presiding over a mock groundbreaking ceremony for the volleyball court just outside Building T-508, a bathhouse located 10 feet inside the camp's outer fence. Wet clothes were hung from a line to create cover from the guard towers on the opposite side of the camp. Under the guise of taking a shower or doing laundry, POWs entered the bathhouse only to slip out through loosened planks on one wall. Then they descended a shaft that led to a 2.5-foot-diameter tunnel 16 feet below the surface. A string of lightbulbs plugged into an electrical outlet in the bathhouse provided illumination—as well as the occasional shock due to frayed wires.

Crews of three men dug at night, working in 90-minute shifts, using shovels, spoons, screwdrivers, and any other tools at hand to remove soil made up mostly of caliche, a fossilized granite common to the Sonoran desert. Dirt was hauled in a cart taken from one of the shower stalls. U-199's Captain Lieutenant Hans-Werner Kraus, an engineer, used crude instruments to calculate that the tunnel needed to be 178 feet long, which would send it under two fences and a patrol road that encircled the camp. That amount of excavation proved to be very difficult. Typical daily progress was three feet or less.

Then there was a boat. Yes, stuck in the middle of the desert, the prisoners had the foresight to craft a collapsible boat. Officers Wolfgang Clarus, Wilhelm Günther, and Friedrich Utzolino set their sights on a path along waterways they had discovered on a stolen map: why hike miles and miles to freedom under a raging hot desert sun when they could float instead? The trio, later known as the Three Mad Boatmen, carved 18-inch struts from pieces of scrap wood to fashion a hull just narrow enough to fit through the tunnel. They covered the frame with canvas and treated the fabric with a tar sealant borrowed from a barracks roofing project. Then came a test. "One evening when it got dark," Clarus later recalled, "we simply dug a hole and filled it with water and put our boat in it. The ship floated beautifully. If it hadn't, I'm sure we would have all burst into tears."

**B**Y MID-DECEMBER the prisoners had completed the tunnel—as well as the volleyball court and some well-manicured flower beds. After several successful trial runs, the U-boat commanders chose 25 men for the escape and divided them into teams of twos and threes. Wattenberg and his officers



RIGHT, CENTER & FAR RIGHT: NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The tunneling operation slowed considerably over the final 50 feet, due to several thick, stubborn veins of rock. The resulting extra time allowed Wattenberg to ponder strategy. Devising a plan to make it more difficult for the prison staff to keep track of his men, he instructed all his officers to boycott morning and afternoon roll calls. As hoped, the stunt enraged Holden, who restricted the rations of all violators. After 16 days of boycotting, the prisoners were offered a compromise. Though all men of all ranks were still required to be present for daily roll call at 9 A.M. and 4:15 P.M., they were now exempt on Sunday morning, and senior officers were required only to stand in their doorways during the count. Wattenberg had claimed a victory greater than he'd imagined. If he timed the coming escape right, the Sunday morning reprieve guaranteed an invaluable head start.

settled on a departure date of Saturday night, December 23, figuring prison staff would be distracted by holiday activities. Indeed, one of Holden's junior officers, a Lieutenant Watson, later described a cursory inspection that day: "I never saw Compound 1-A looking better. The men even had some rather attractive hand-made Christmas decorations hung up in their mess halls."

Each POW team prepared its own escape provisions, which included lightweight packets of bread crumbs that could be easily turned into basic sustenance by adding water or milk. Some men fashioned fake Nazi medals and badges from melted toothpaste tubes and traded them to camp guards for socks, chocolate, coffee, and other useful goods that could be stuffed into rucksacks.

On the afternoon of December 23, the prisoners staged another ruse, a raucous party erupting in Compound 1-B that pretended to

Opposite: Camp Papago was far enough from Phoenix to be surrounded by desert. And it wasn't just empty sand threatening mere dehydration to anyone who dared try to escape. Here hid a field guide's fill of venomous creatures. Above: Three POWs who had the nerve to challenge the conditions along with Jürgen Wattenberg were (from left) Jürgen Quaet-Faslem, Johann Kremer, and Fritz Guggenberger.

# NAZIS ON THE MESA by Christopher Warner

celebrate the news of a recent offensive near Bastogne by Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt. Beer and homemade schnapps flowed freely, an accordion blared loudly, and a chorus of “Deutschland Über Alles” (“Germany over All,” the Nazi-preferred title of the German national anthem) rang through the camp. Adding to the revelry, and further mocking the Americans, prisoners launched a weather balloon displaying a Nazi naval flag. The guards initially feared a full-scale riot was about to unfold, prompting Holden to deploy teargas grenades.

Meanwhile, in Compound 1-A, a conspicuous calm should have worried camp officials. The German officers patiently waited for nightfall, listening to their favorite radio shows on local station KTAR one last time. They placed bets on whether they’d hear the Cole Porter classic *Don’t Fence Me In*, which had recently topped the charts—and become an unofficial anthem for POWs everywhere.

As darkness fell, and with Holden away for the holidays, the prisoners made their move, descending into the tunnel. Once outside, most of the teams dispersed southward toward the Mexican border, finding temporary shelter in barns, stables, and other structures along the way. Wattenberg, accompanied by *U-162* crewmen Walter Kozur and Johann Kremer, elected to stop only six miles north of Phoenix. They hid out in a cave next to the area’s most prominent landmark, Camelback Mountain, a curious choice.

**D**URING THE SUNDAY afternoon roll call, US Corporals Eugene Hoya and Frank Gebhardt discovered that several prisoners were missing from Compound 1-A. Provost Marshal Parshall began alerting authorities. The stern WWI veteran had been on the phone only a few minutes when he received a call from the local sheriff, who claimed that Herbert Fuchs, a 22-year-old U-boat crewman, had just turned himself in. Within minutes, Parshall took several more calls about escaped POWs, and by the time Holden returned to camp at 9 A.M., six had surrendered or been arrested. Still, 19 prisoners remained on the run, and army officials had no idea when or how they’d escaped.

Christmas Day brought a blizzard of embarrassing questions, and little cheer, to Camp Papago. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover demanded immediate answers. The possibility of an attack on nearby Boulder Dam and its vital power plant operations raised serious national security fears. A hit on a site like that would paralyze the energy-dependent aviation indus-

try based in Los Angeles while also demoralizing a citizenry already shocked by newspaper headlines such as “Search Underway for Escaped Nazis” and “Wily Germans Elude Chase.”

The army launched a massive search party and offered a bounty of \$25 a head. Local cowboys, ranchers, and Papagos joined in to canvas a wide area stretching to the Mexican border. Native American scouts stayed especially busy throughout the search, lending to the effort their renowned tracking skills and their familiarity with the area. If all these hunters didn’t stack the odds against the prisoners high enough on their own, there was also the threat of lethal dehydration in an unfamiliar environment infested with venomous rattlesnakes, coral snakes, gila monsters, black widows, scorpions, and tarantulas.

By January 10, only two three-man POW teams remained at large. One was the Three Mad Boatmen, which soon discovered that the Salt and Gila rivers, appearing so large and inviting on the map, were more mud than water. “We should have known that the Gila wasn’t much of a river,” Clarus said later. “Of course, everyone who lives in Arizona knows that.” Eventually, the disheartened trio abandoned its naval operation and resumed its escape on foot. A few days later, the three were back at Camp Papago, leaving Wattenberg and his crew as the remaining holdouts.

The manhunt continued, focusing along the Mexican border. Little did the Americans know that Wattenberg was watching them from high above in his Camelback Mountain lair. What followed next was his most audacious action yet. Prior to the escape, he had arranged with fellow prisoners who worked daily outside the camp to leave food and supplies in an abandoned car. The plan succeeded, but it didn’t push the envelope far enough for Wattenberg. He decided to have Kremer infiltrate a crew while it was out working and return to camp with it at the end of the day. There he would pick up information, newspapers, and additional food rations. Then he could either join another work detail to deliver his collection in person or send the items and intelligence out with other prisoners.

Remarkably, the subterfuge worked well until a surprise inspection exposed Kremer’s presence in camp. Later that night, Kozur left

the cave to retrieve the usual delivery of provisions but instead found three American soldiers waiting for him. Exactly one month after their escape, every prisoner was back behind barbed wire with one glaring exception: Jürgen Wattenberg.

On his 44th birthday, and day 35 of his desert journey, Watten-

## 19 Germans Expected To Give Up When They Tire of Arizona Desert

By the Associated Press.

PHOENIX, Ariz., Dec. 27.—The next 36 hours may determine if there will be a quick roundup of 19 Germans still at large after a sensational escape from the Papago Park prisoner of war camp, an Army officer said today.

Six of 25 Nazi U-boat officers and men who fled through a 200-foot tunnel were recaptured Sunday night a few hours after the escape was discovered. None has been apprehended since.

The ranking escapee is Navy Capt. Jurgen Wattenberg, 43, former officer on the Admiral Graf Spee, scuttled German pocket battleship. He later was decorated by the Nazis for sinking a Brazilian freighter.

“Past experience would indicate most of the recaptures should come in the next day or two,” Maj. Eugene Tays, director of security and intelligence at the camp, said.

“It usually takes four or five days for them to become tired in their flight across the desert, then they surrender,” Maj. Tays declared.

Col. William A. Holden, camp commandant, said 12 of the 19 fugitives were first-rate submarine officers. Some speak English and are accomplished linguists.

Col. Holden disclosed yesterday that individual prisoners labored tediously many months excavating through rock a 200-foot escape tunnel from an outdoor coal box to an exit beyond the camp’s east fence. Col. Holden explained the rock is composed of crusts of calcium carbonate of varying degrees of hardness.

He denied that Guenther Prien, U-boat commander credited with sinking the British battleship Royal Oak, was a prisoner here. The report was blamed on a misunderstanding of an inquiry.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Above: Newspapers immediately sent reporters out to cover the sensational big prisoner escape and record-breaking manhunt.





Some people thought Camp Papago was more like a country club than a prison. Their exhibit A captures the resident German POWs at leisure, shirtless, and mostly well suntanned. At the center, Captain at Sea Jürgen Wattenberg stands leader-like.

berg finished the last of his food, cleaned himself up, and hiked into Phoenix. Around 1:30 A.M. the lone remaining fugitive asked for directions from a street cleaner, who became suspicious of his accent and notified a policeman. Sergeant Gilbert Brady soon caught up with the tall stranger.

"Sir, could I see your Selective Service registration?" the Phoenix police officer asked.

"I left it at home."

"Where is home?"

"I am a rancher in town for the weekend."

"You may be a rancher but I want to know where you're from?"

"Why, can't you tell that I'm from Glendale?"

"Glendale, Arizona, or Glendale, California?"

"Glendale, back East."

Brady had heard enough. He offered Wattenberg a cigarette and informed him they'd have to go to the police station. Appreciative of the generous gesture, the now-weary German inhaled deeply before offering a confession: "I am the 'big shot' you're looking for."

Upon return to prison, Wattenberg and the other escapees faced long interrogations, on top of a punishment of two weeks of restricted rations. The men offered up little information, describing the event as nothing more than good-natured mischief.

A threat of ill will, real and perceived, persisted at the facility until after the war ended. By then, grim news of Nazi atrocities

committed in places like Auschwitz and Dachau had been exposed, casting a long shadow on Germans everywhere. Could POWs in Arizona have had motives other than the mere desire for a harmless jaunt or to return home? Wattenberg's son Earhart, a retired businessman who lives in Hamburg, Germany, recently offered an answer to that question for his late father: "The intention was clearly to escape to Mexico and from there back to Germany."

**L**IKE ODYSSEUS, Jürgen Wattenberg eventually found his way home. He quickly adjusted to civilian life and became a successful executive for the Bavaria and St. Pauli Brewery. In 1985, he returned to Arizona along with other POWs to be the guest of honor at a ceremony marking the 40th anniversary of their escape.

Camp Papago has long since been replaced by urban sprawl spotted with playgrounds, an Elk's Lodge, and the Phoenix Zoo. But not all signs of the camp and its inhabitants have disappeared. There's a small military museum that features artifacts from the prison. The memory of Wattenberg and the other escapees lives on in the tangible form of an autographed wooden oar from that collapsible boat. ★

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CHRISTOPHER WARNER is an actor, screenwriter, and freelance writer whose articles have appeared in *WWII Quarterly*, *Portland Monthly*, and other magazines. He lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife and four cats.

When the D-Day  
invaders finally  
broke free from  
the beaches,  
Adolf Hitler knew  
he had to stop  
them immediately.

At Mortain,  
France, America's  
outnumbered and  
outgunned Old  
Hickory Division  
looked doomed.

# tough as Hickory

by John D. Howard

**a**N ORDER WENT OUT FROM ADOLF HITLER on August 1, 1944. In no uncertain terms, it told Field Marshal Günther von Kluge, commander of Army Group B and supreme field commander on the western front, *exactly* what he was and wasn't to do about the massive US and British force that was just starting to squeeze out of its cramped beachhead on France's Normandy coast:

*The enemy is not under any circumstance to be permitted to break out into the open. Army Group B will prepare a counterattack, using all panzer [armored] units, to push through as far as Avranches, cut off the enemy units that have broken through and destroy them. All available panzer forces are to be withdrawn from their present front sectors, even if there are no divisions to relieve them and are to be employed for this purpose. The outcome of the campaign depends upon this counterattack.*

The Brits and Yanks had packed into the Normandy beachhead starting on June 6, 1944—D-Day—when a great Allied host crossed the English Channel from Great Britain and landed on beaches along northern France's Cotentin Peninsula. The Allies were bent on driving Hitler's forces out of France. But once they made it ashore they were stuck, waiting anxiously for an opportunity to break free from the beachhead's confines and push into the French interior.

An Allied breakout was exactly what Hitler wanted to prevent. At the end of July, however, the Allies' opportunity came. In an initiative codenamed Operation Cobra, American forces began escaping from the beachhead and into the open.

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A patrol from the US 30th Infantry Division—the Old Hickory—moves warily through devastated Mortain, France, in early August 1944. The Old Hickory was fighting a fierce battle against an entire German tank corps, sent to keep American forces from moving inland after their invasion of France's Normandy region that June.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES







# tough as Hickory by John D. Howard

Hitler's pointed instructions to Kluge on August 1 were meant to nip that breakout in the bud.

## Americans on the Loose

OPERATION COBRA HAD HAD A SLOW START. Hedgerows crisscrossing Normandy—manmade hedge barriers, some dating back to the Roman Empire, fencing off small plots of land hardly bigger than football fields—had stalled the Allied advance since D-Day. Most hedgerows were 8 to 10 feet wide and more than 6 feet high. Covered with brambles and tangles of trees, they made ideal defensive positions. The Germans used them skillfully, forcing the Allies into a series of casualty-inflicting battles reminiscent of World War I's trench warfare. American losses were high and daily progress was measured in mere yards.



To break this stalemate, Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley's US First Army planned a massive aerial bombing near the town of Saint-Lô, just past the point where the Cotentin Peninsula ended and the Norman mainland began. The bombing aimed at obliterating enemy resistance so US forces could move into open country south and east of the town.

Inclement weather delayed the bombing raid until July 24, and when the planes did finally get into the air, bombs dropped short of enemy lines fell on friendly forces, killing 25 Americans. The mission resumed after a 24-hour postponement, but the B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers flew perpendicular to the battle zone's forward edge instead of flying parallel to friendly lines as requested. More bombs spilled on US troops, inflicting 660 casualties. One of the 111 killed was Lieutenant General Leslie McNair, who had gone forward to observe the operation. McNair became the highest-ranking American officer killed during World War II.

Despite this bloody and inauspicious start, Bradley decided the attack could wait no longer. He gave the order to go, and Major General J. Lawton "Lightning Joe" Collins's VII Corps advanced.

Resistance was stronger than expected; some of the Germans had moved out of the impact area after the aborted mission on the 24th and were now perfectly positioned to mount a tenacious defense. Nevertheless, after hard fighting, the Americans penetrated the defenses of the German 7th Army, commanded by SS Oberst-Gruppenführer Paul Hausser. (Oberst-gruppenführer, or supreme group leader, was the highest rank in the SS—the Schutzstaffel, or protection squadron, a Nazi paramilitary organization.) Within a week, US forces were in the seaside town of Avranches, about 38 miles south of Saint-Lô, disconnecting Hausser's left flank from the coast.

With the German west flank broken open, the stopper was out of the bottle, and the Americans poured out of the Cotentin Peninsula. The US forces quickly reorganized for the new phase of



operations. On the same day that Hitler sent his directive to Kluge—August 1—Bradley took command of the new US Twelfth Army Group. His former deputy, Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges, took over the First Army. Lieutenant General George S. Patton Jr., commanding the newly activated Third Army, pushed four corps through Avranches. One of those, the VIII Corps, headed into Brittany, a peninsula south and west of the Cotentin, and laid siege to the principal ports there—Brest, Lorient, and Saint-Nazaire. Patton's three other corps drove eastward toward the Seine River, attacking on terrain that offered good mobility. What Hitler feared had begun, and he wanted it stopped immediately.

## Mission: Reseal the Bottle

KLUGE WAS WELL AWARE OF THE DANGERS the US divisions posed operating in open country. On the eastern front June 1941–October 1943, he had encountered similar situations fighting the Russians. He knew he had to stop Patton before the situation became irretrievable. But how? Kluge's forces were already hard-pressed in all sectors.

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Normandy was bocage country, where tall, thick, ancient hedgerows divided the landscape into parcels of field and pasture. The hedgerows made perfect defenses for the Germans, forcing the Americans to advance blindly under fire. Above, left: Riflemen from Company A of the 30th Division's 119th Infantry fire through a hedgerow near Mortain on August 9. Above, right: A mortar crew lobs a round over a hedgerow.



Hitler, untrained in military science but nonetheless always ready to direct his experienced generals, recommended that Kluge employ the II SS Panzer Corps. But that corps was already decisively engaged against the British. So Kluge instead selected the XLVII Panzer Corps, headed by General der Panzertruppe (General of the Armored Corps) Hans von Funck. Hitler loathed Funck and had relieved one of his close associates for suspected disloyalty. Although Funck was one of his most competent generals, Hitler wanted a different commander to lead the counteroffensive. But Kluge and Hausser stood firm, and Funck stayed in place, with Army Group B's hopes pinned on his four panzer divisions.

Not since the June 6 launch of the Allied invasion had the Germans sent an entire tank corps into battle. Hitler even released 60 new Panther medium tanks for the assault. Kluge believed that surprise and massed armor would overcome opposition, even amid Normandy's restrictive hedgerow terrain. Funck's tanks would make their stand to halt Patton's onrushing columns around Mortain, a town around 22 miles east of Avranches.

**F**UNCK SET ABOUT positioning his forces. He placed his 116th Panzer Division on the right, in the north; it would attack along the northern bank of the Sée River, an east-west estuary about five miles north of Mortain. The 2nd Panzer Division, reinforced with two additional battalions, would be at the center, making the main attack; its northern flank would rest on the Sée's southern bank. The 2nd SS Panzer Division, bolstered by the 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division (a regiment-size unit of infantry transported in vehicles, operating with motorized assault guns), would attack on both sides of Mortain, protecting the left, or southern, flank of Funck's XLVII Panzer Corps. Lastly, Funck reserved his 1st SS Panzer Division in the rear, ready to exploit initial success and then pass through the line to secure Avranches.

As the panzer divisions wheeled into position, it was apparent that there were sharply differing opinions about the scope of Funck's counteroffensive—codenamed Operation Lüttich to evoke an August 1914 German victory of World War I in Lüttich (the German name for the Belgian city of Liège). Hitler euphorically believed the action would force the Allies back to their Normandy beachhead and eventually push them into the English Channel. Kluge was more conservative. All he dared hope for was to restore the German defensive line at Avranches and thereby cover Army Group B's withdrawal to more defensible terrain east of the Seine River.

With the situation looking worse by the hour, Kluge knew he had to launch his counterstroke as soon as possible. On the afternoon of August 6, he instructed his subordinates to commence the attack at 10:00 that night.

## Old Hickory in Harm's Way

OPERATION LÜTTICH WOULD SEVERELY TEST the Americans, and no unit more so than the 30th Infantry Division. The 30th was one of four National Guard divisions called to active duty in 1940. Its nickname, Old Hickory, honored the seventh president, Andrew Jackson, because many of the division's soldiers, like Jackson, had ties to Tennessee and the Carolinas.

By the time the Old Hickory Division embarked for Great Britain in February 1944, it had lost all vestiges of its National Guard roots. Commanders and staff officers who didn't measure up had been weeded out. Transfers, replacements, and an extended training period had homogenized the organization.

At the head was Major General Leland S. Hobbs, a Regular Army officer who would command from November 1942 through VE Day. Hobbs was a member of West Point's 164-man class of 1915, often described as "the class the stars fell on," which produced 59 generals, including Bradley and Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower.

The 30th Division arrived in France seven days after D-Day and plunged into combat. During Operation Cobra it was on the front line, attached to the VII Corps, which was tasked with expanding the gap Patton's army was passing through.

In the early hours of August 6, the 30th was on its way to conduct a relief-in-place with the 1st Infantry Division (moving into the 1st Division's line and taking over, allowing the 1st to withdraw) at Mortain. The village of 1,300 souls controlled an important east-west road network leading to Avranches. The terrain was not unlike the Cotentin Peninsula, with hedgerows, streams, and rolling country that restricted movement and favored defenders over attackers.

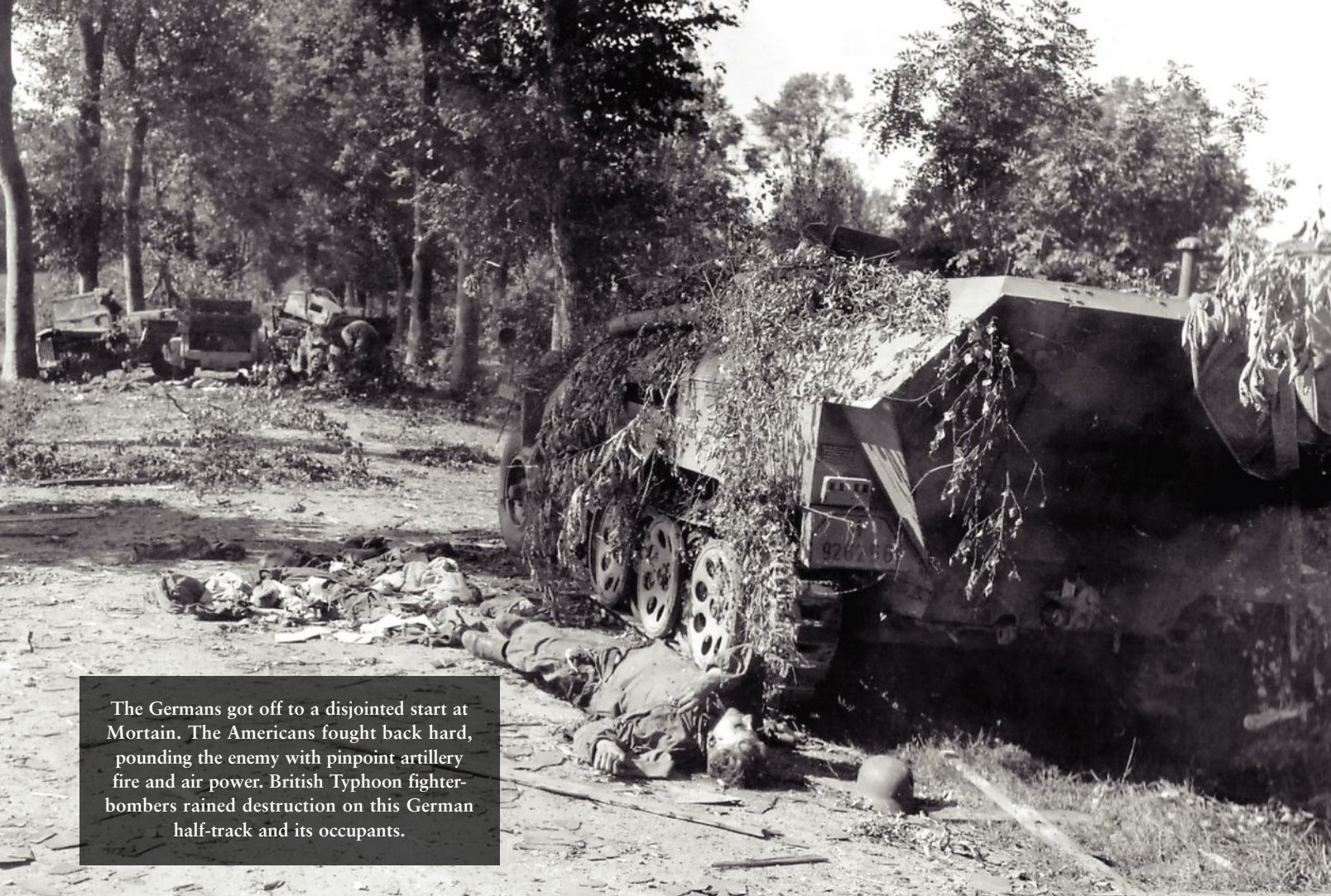
The people of Mortain cheered the Yanks' arrival, but the would-be liberators were in trouble from the start. Extensive combat coupled with casualties from the "friendly" bombs at Saint-Lô had already reduced the Old Hickory's ranks. The division was near-

ly 1,000 men understrength, primarily in its three infantry regiments—the 117th, 119th, and 120th. The situation grew worse when two infantry battalions were detached for other missions.

Hobbs had only seven infantry battalions to defend a seven-mile front at Mortain. He employed a two-up-and-one-back defense: two regiments, the 117th and 120th Infantry (minus its 3rd Battalion) were forward, occupying key terrain around Saint-Barthélemy and Mortain, and one regiment, the 119th Infantry (less its 2nd Battalion), was held back in reserve. High ground east of Mortain, a mile-long cluster of knobs and rocky outcroppings



Army Group B's Field Marshal Günther von Kluge (top) and 7th Army head Paul Hausser (above) knew they needed to fall back. But they had orders: cram the Americans back in their beachhead.



The Germans got off to a disjointed start at Mortain. The Americans fought back hard, pounding the enemy with pinpoint artillery fire and air power. British Typhoon fighter-bombers rained destruction on this German half-track and its occupants.

separated by deep draws, dominated the landscape. Called Montjoie by the locals and dubbed Hill 317 by the Americans, it provided excellent visibility in all directions.

Relieving the 1st Division was difficult. It was dark by the time all the 30th Division elements arrived, and Hobbs didn't assume responsibility for the sector until 8 P.M. His division was in the dark in more ways than one: maps were in short supply, and his subordinates had little opportunity to conduct detailed reconnaissance. The Old Hickory could do little more than simply occupy the 1st Division's hastily prepared fighting positions.

There was no inkling that a major counterattack was about to erupt, not even at the division level. Ultra intercepts—enemy messages encrypted with German Enigma code but intercepted and deciphered by the ultra-secret decoding machine at Bletchley Park in England—uncovered Kluge's plan, but the information did not reach First Army headquarters until mid-day on August 7. By then the fighting had started.

### **Rough Start to a Rough Fight**

BAD OFF AS THE AMERICANS WERE, the Germans were in worse shape. Funck had requested a 24-hour delay so his XLVII Panzer Corps could complete its preparations. Funck told Hausser, his immediate superior, that his troops wouldn't be ready by 10 P.M. His reserve, the 1st SS Panzer Division, was conducting a night motor march and wouldn't be assembled until daylight.

That wasn't all. The 2nd Panzer Division, Funck's main attack-

ing force, hadn't received its attachments and replacement tanks. Then there was Funck asking Hausser's permission to relieve Lieutenant General Gerhard von Schwerin, commander of the 116th Panzer Division. Schwerin, falsely suspected of collusion in a July 20 plot to assassinate Hitler, was vocally pessimistic about Lüttich. But Hausser denied the relief request and dismissed Funck's problems collecting his forces: "This does not alter the fact that Lüttich will be executed as ordered!"

When Funck's piecemeal offensive commenced several hours late, only the 2nd SS Panzer Division in the south was able to attack en masse. At the center, the 2nd Panzer Division moved forward with just a single regiment. In the north, Schwerin's 116th Panzer Division didn't attack at all. Funck removed Schwerin the next day, commenting, "He always mucks up things."

**m**EANWHILE, THE AMERICANS WERE DOING whatever they could to firm up their position in case of an attack. The 120th Infantry Regiment's 2nd Battalion defended the 30th Division's most critical sector—Mortain and Hill 317. Colonel Hammond Birks, the 120th's commander, augmented the 2nd Battalion with an additional rifle company (K Company from the 3rd Battalion) and two platoons from the regiment's antitank company. Armed with 57mm recoilless rifles (antitank guns that could be carried and fired from the shoulder or in the prone position), the antitank platoons and supporting infantry established roadblocks astride likely avenues of attack.



# tough as Hickory by John D. Howard

Shortly after midnight, the Germans put the Americans' roadblocks to the test, and the 2nd Battalion caught the full fury of the 2nd SS Panzer attack. Even without a preliminary artillery barrage, the German tanks and infantry eliminated all but one of the roadblocks and entered Mortain. Birks sent his reserve forces to counter the attack, but the panzer force repulsed them. The antitank and infantry troops not killed or captured joined the men on Hill 317.

On the morning of August 7, the Germans overran the 2nd Battalion command post, in a Mortain hotel. Lieutenant Colonel Eads Hardaway, the battalion commander, alerted headquarters that he and his staff would escape to Hill 317. They never made it. Despite hiding in buildings and ditches, Hardaway and his staff were found and captured. Only two staff members reached friendly lines.

A surviving roadblock near Abbaye Blanche, a convent for Cistercian nuns, continued to fight, and succeeded in knocking out German tanks and vehicles. But Hill 317 was surrounded. GIs there fought hand to hand against the infiltrating 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division. In the gloom of night, one enemy Mark IV tank drove straight into the defenses of the 2nd Battalion's E Company on the hill's south side. Fortunately for the Americans, the tank withdrew due to a lack of reinforcements. "We would have been driven off the hill if that bastard hadn't pulled out," remarked Lieutenant E.C. Rohmiller, whose platoon was almost overrun.

Unaware that Hardaway was captured, but unable to raise him on the radio, Captain Reynold Erichson, the 2nd Battalion's senior company commander, took charge. He was fortunate to have two competent forward observer teams, led by First Lieutenant Charles Bartz and Second Lieutenant Robert Weiss from the 230th Field Artillery Battalion. The observers, trained to go forward, sight enemy positions, and call in pinpointed artillery strikes, lugged 35-pound SCR-610 radios that had a five-mile range, just enough to reach their artillery batteries. The bulky SCR-610s became the 2nd Battalion's lifelines as the observers pounded the attackers with well-placed artillery fire.

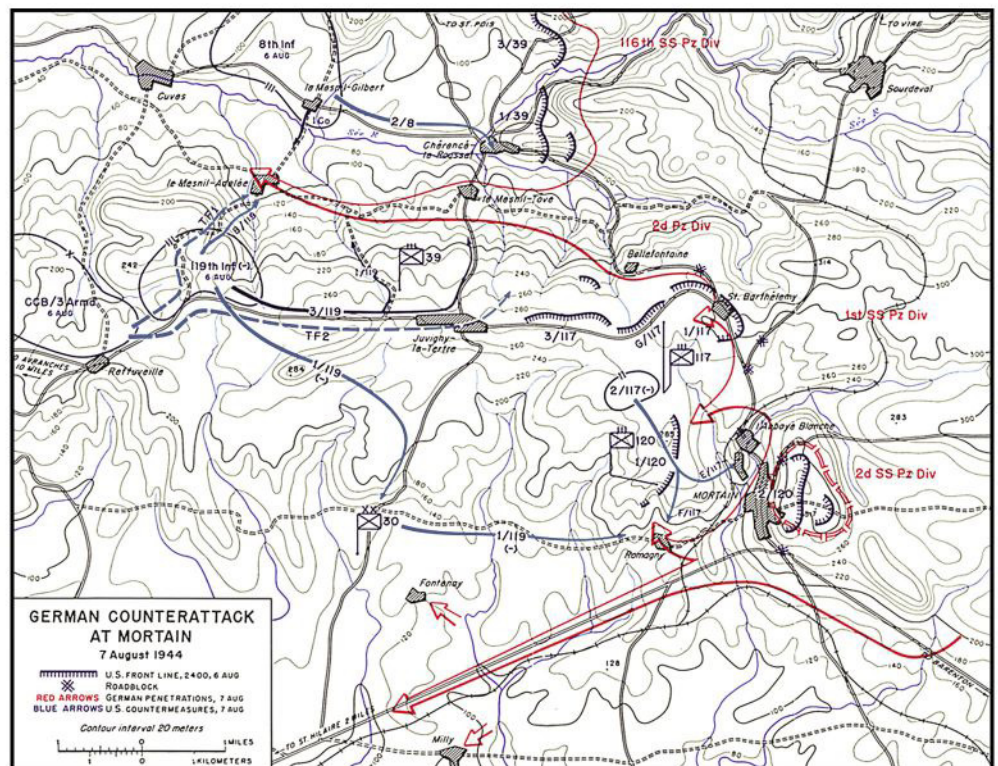
## Trouble Outside Town

THE 120TH INFANTRY REGIMENT'S COMMAND POST west of town was soon under direct fire from enemy infantry and armor, but the headquarters troops rallied and held off the Germans. Private First Class Joseph Shipley, a switchboard operator, grabbed a 2.36-inch rocket launcher, commonly called a bazooka, and knocked out an enemy tank 220 yards from the command post. A subsequent shot glanced harmlessly off a second panzer's turret, but the strike caused the crew to jam the tank into reverse and retreat. Shipley received the Silver Star and the French Croix de Guerre for his bravery.

In Saint-Barthélemy, a mile north of Mortain, the 117th Infantry's 1st Battalion was locked in a do-or-die struggle. Its isolated platoons were fighting in small pockets, and even the command staff was caught in the melee. Combatants were so intermixed that Lieutenant Colonel Robert Frankland, the battalion commander, killed a German Panther tank commander with his .45-caliber pistol.

Lieutenant Colonel Harold Hassenflet, the 30th Division's G3 (operations officer), called the 117th Regiment and asked, "What does it look like down there?" "Looks like hell," replied Colonel Walter Johnson. "We are just mingled in one big mess, our CP [command post] is getting all kinds of fire and enemy tanks are within 500 yards of us."

Things looked grim, but the 1st Battalion held on. By day's end the battalion and its attached tank destroyer company had suffered 350 casualties, more than half the men present for duty. The



area to its front was a junkyard of abandoned German armor and burning vehicles.

The 117th Infantry's 2nd and 3rd Battalions, joined by the 30th Division's reserve (the 119th Infantry minus its 2nd Battalion), were busy attempting to blunt the 2nd Panzer Division's drive toward Le Mesnil-Adelée, about nine miles northwest of Mortain. The Germans had already penetrated four miles into American lines, following an unimproved road parallel to the Sée River's south bank. Lightning Joe Collins sprang to the rescue, committing his VII Corps reserve—Combat Command B of the 3rd Armored Division, and the 4th Infantry Division's 8th Regiment—to help stop it. Collins's timely decision and the additional firepower of Combat Command B halted the 2nd Panzer Division's drive, eliminating any possibility of a German breakthrough to Avranches 10 miles away.

Throughout August 7, Allied tactical air support and continuous artillery fire helped slow the enemy's momentum. Fog predict-

ed by Kluge's meteorologists did not materialize, nor did the 1,000 Luftwaffe sorties promised by the German high command. Instead, British and US fighters roamed the skies unopposed, forcing Funck's tank columns and troop formations to disperse and seek cover until dark. The XLVII Panzer Corps's chief of staff acidly told a Seventh Army headquarters officer that he hadn't seen a Luftwaffe plane all day. "The activities of the [Allied] fighter-bombers are almost unbearable," he went on to say. "The 1st SS Panzer Division reports that fighter-bomber attacks of such a caliber have never been experienced."

**U**NDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, the US forces lifted their restrictions on ammunition expenditure, allowing 24-7 engagement. The 30th Infantry Division's artillery commander, Brigadier General James Lewis, massed the fire of a dozen artillery battalions to help the beleaguered defenders. He orchestrated support from the 30th Infantry Division's three 105mm battalions and the 155mm battalion as well as from adjacent divi-

The operational tempo on August 8 caused considerable worry at Twelfth Army Group headquarters. Bradley feared the enemy might still be able to reach Avranches and drive a wedge between his two armies. Twelve US divisions and their service support units had already passed through the town. Four of those divisions made up the US XV Corps, and were committed to Patton's rush toward the Seine.

Bradley mulled two options. He could use the XV Corps to reinforce Mortain, or he could gamble that the Old Hickory Division's defenses would hold and use the XV Corps instead to strike the German Seventh Army's exposed flank to the north. Weighing all the factors, he made the bolder decision. The attack would be synchronized with a push by British and Canadian forces; if they and the XV Corps could link up near Falaise or Argentan, Hauser's army would be surrounded.

Bradley's confidence in the 30th Infantry Division was well placed. Division commander Hobbs already sensed that the enemy counteroffensive had run its course. His embattled units had seen



sions and the large-caliber guns of the VII Corps. This heavy, accurate fire pounded enemy formations and kept the Germans from overrunning Hill 317. Lieutenant Bob Weiss, a 21-year-old forward observer on the hill, radioed after one successful fire mission, "I never felt so good as I feel right now!"

### The Old Hickory Holds Its Ground

ON THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 7, Kluge concluded that his counter-offensive had failed. His panzer units were bogged down, and recovering Avranches was impossible. Rapid buildup of US Third Army units south of Hauser's lines posed a real threat. But if Kluge hoped to withdraw, Hitler dashed any such notion, ordering the offensive to be renewed on August 8. He believed the assault had begun prematurely and Kluge's "defeatist attitude" was responsible for the failure. Kluge had no immediately available reinforcements to augment Funck's XLVII Panzer Corps, but Hitler didn't take that into consideration.



some tenuous moments, but they were holding the line. The gravest threat had been the 2nd Panzer Division, but the Old Hickory had stopped it short of Mesnil-Adelée and forced it to retreat. And in the south, the 120th Infantry Regiment had contained the 2nd SS Panzer Division's progress.

Hobbs's focus now shifted to relieving the men on Hill 317. He thought of the 2nd Battalion there as his "lost battalion," though not one soldier on the hill considered the unit lost. Captain Erichson sent the reassuring message, "Not to worry about the situation, as long as the friendly artillery continues."

### Hanging On to the Hill

THE DEFENSE OF HILL 317 was one of the outstanding small-unit actions of World War II. After several days the men of the isolated battalion were running short on critical supplies. Water was available from several cisterns and a small stream, and nearby farmers shared some food with the soldiers. But radio batteries,

Above, left: At an advance aid station at Mortain, medics splint one GI's broken ankle (left) and administer plasma to another soldier (right) who suffered a shrapnel wound to the head. Above, right: Moving through Mortain to root out final pockets of resistance as the battle winds down, an Old Hickory Division soldier toting a Thompson submachine gun looks over US vehicles destroyed by the fighting.



# tough as Hickory by John D. Howard

ammunition, medical supplies, and rations were scarce. Batteries were especially crucial because radios were the 2nd Battalion's sole link to artillery support and higher headquarters.

On August 9, the division's spotter planes—small craft that observed enemy positions from overhead and helped direct fire—attempted to drop supplies to the men on Hill 317, but anti-aircraft fire drove them off. A parachute drop from C-47 transport aircraft was slow to materialize, but the planes finally arrived on the afternoon of August 10. One man on the hill called the lumbering aircraft “the most beautiful sight I ever saw.” As the multi-colored parachutes floated down, however, half landed behind enemy lines. The bundles the Americans were able to recover provided at least some essential food, ammunition, and batteries, and a limited amount of medical supplies. Another resupply mission came on the 11th.

One enterprising American commander, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Vieman of the 230th Field Artillery Battalion, hatched an unorthodox plan to get supplies onto Hill 317. He took 105mm shell cases normally used for propaganda leaflets, packed them with supplies, and fired them to the 2nd Battalion. None of the first six shells could be recovered, but the following salvos reached their target. Inspired by this success, the 113th Field Artillery Battalion used its 155mm howitzers to fire larger shells full of supplies, but no one could figure out how to send plasma bottles and morphine syrettes without smashing them. Still, the airdrops and the “supply shoot” provided enough provisions for the 2nd Battalion to hang on.

There was another problem on Hill 317: what to do with the dead, American and German. Erichson believed visible bodies of killed US soldiers would harm morale, so he established makeshift morgues in the hill's ravines and crevices. The men dragged slain comrades' bodies into these out-of-sight locations. But there was little time to bury the remains, and the hot August weather hastened decomposition. After a few days, Hill 317 reeked with the stench of decaying bodies, a smell survivors never forgot.

Despite the hardships, the Americans on the hill had no intention of giving up. The 2nd SS Panzer Division's commander, Oberführer (senior leader) Otto Baum, learned this when, at 6 P.M. on August 9, he sent an English-speaking Waffen SS officer up the southern slope under a flag of truce. With great formality the officer told E Company's commander, First Lieutenant Ralph A. Kerley, that the situation was hopeless and the SS was offering honorable surrender terms. Kerley, who would become one of the youngest infantry majors at war's end, told him in graphic language what he could do with his offer. When news of the rejection reached the Old Hickory Division headquarters, the public affairs officer wrote a heroic version of Kerley's response for public consumption. It had Kerley saying the Americans “would continue to resist as long as they had bullets to fire and bayonets to thrust into the bellies of Germans.” Kerley denied ever making such a melodramatic statement.

When fighting resumed and SS troops redoubled their efforts to take the hill, it was no coincidence that E Company received the first blow. But when the Germans penetrated the company perimeter, Kerley called in artillery on his own position. The fire destroyed the attack. Fortunately, the defenders had improved their foxholes since arriving on August 6, so there were few friendly casualties as the shells rained down. Kerley reported, “The artillery barrage was a shot in the arm for sagging morale.” All 2nd Battalion positions on Hill 317 stood firm.

Finally, on August 12, a battalion from the 35th Infantry Division and the 1st Battalion of the 119th Infantry made contact with the hollow-eyed Americans on Hill 317. Only 350 2nd Battalion men were able to walk off; another 300 had been killed, seriously wounded, or captured. One 2nd Battalion infantryman who viewed the rubble that was once the picturesque town of Mortain remarked, “We sure liberated the hell out of that place.” The residents who had cheered the Yanks' arrival six days earlier were now sullen, even hostile.



Driven away by the battle, women of Mortain prepare to return home. They will find their town in ruins. Initial enthusiasm for the American liberators will become muted at best.

**T**HE AUGUST 7–12 DEFENSE of Mortain had cost the 30th Infantry Division nearly 2,000 casualties. The 117th Infantry Regiment's 1st Battalion and the 120th Infantry Regiment's 2nd Battalion and their attachments received the Distinguished Unit Citation for their heroic conduct at Saint-Barthélemy and on Hill 317. Captain Erichson and Lieutenant Kerley received the Distinguished Service Cross, America's second highest valor medal, for their leadership and gallantry.

Once the fighting around Mortain subsided, Eisenhower paid Hobbs, his old friend and classmate, a visit. Hobbs told his boss that August 7 was the battle's critical day and that his understrength forces had come close to disintegration against more than 150 tanks and the better part of three German divisions. It had been a touch-and-go fight. He admitted to Ike that “with a heavy breath that day the Germans would have achieved their objective.”

The action at Mortain was the precursor to the end for Kluge's Army Group B. US XV Corps and British and Canadian troops linked up on August 19, 1944, encircling a large portion of the German force in a pocket between Falaise and Argentan. Kluge's group lost huge amounts of equipment and some 60,000 men. It was a disaster for Nazi Germany, whose manpower pool was shrinking and whose industrial base couldn't replace materiel losses. And it couldn't have happened if the 30th Infantry Division hadn't stood fast in the face of overwhelming numbers on the rocky spurs of Mortain. ★

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# the General Ike Hated

When a top US commander had a chance to cross the Rhine River and charge into Germany, Dwight Eisenhower said no.

The reason? Ike loathed him.

by Edward G. Longacre

**T**HE STORY OF THE REMAGEN BRIDGE IS A BELOVED EPISODE OF WWII HISTORY, at least for Americans. We all know the narrative, how units of Lieutenant General Omar Bradley's US Twelfth Army Group found the Ludendorff Bridge intact at Remagen, Germany, on March 7, 1945, and how they captured it and began crossing the Rhine River into Germany's heartland.

History, however, could have featured a very different and perhaps more spectacular story. On November 23, 1944—fully three and a half months before the Remagen crossing—another American force reached the banks of the Rhine 130 miles farther south and was ready to cross. The crossing, by lead elements of Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers's Sixth Army Group, had every promise of success, because the German line on the opposite bank was weak and ill-prepared. The crossing seemed likely to roll up the German southern flank, which could have prevented the Battle of the Bulge, saved tens of thousands of American lives, and led swiftly to Allied victory in Europe.

But no such crossing was made. In fact, General Dwight "Ike" Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander, absolutely forbade it. Why? His momentous decision rested not on cunning strategic calculations or secret knowledge about enemy resources, but on deep-seated resentment and one man's dislike for another.

## Destined to Wear Stars

DEVERS (RHYMES WITH SEVERS), a 35-year army veteran, hailed from York, Pennsylvania, where he was born in 1887, the eldest of four children. His father owned a small business, and his mother's ancestors had immigrated to the United States in the early 1800s from Alsace, the very section of eastern France that Devers's forces would occupy in late 1944. Proficient in mathematics and science, Devers graduated with honors from York High School and was studying engineering at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, when a local congressman appointed him to the US Military Academy.

Devers, known to his buddies as Jake, was ungainly and slightly built, but he excelled on West Point's basketball and baseball teams. Self-discipline acquired in early youth made him a model cadet. One description labeled him "an exceedingly earnest youth with rather Puritanical views." He didn't gamble, he rarely touched liquor or tobacco, and, in contrast to classmates such as George S. Patton Jr., he wasn't known for boisterousness or a salty vocabulary. The class of 1909's yearbook summed him up this way: "For purity, propriety and precision, Jacob is hard to beat."

Graduating 39th in a class of 103, Devers was posted to the field artillery, where he advocated for innovation and mechanization. He served at army posts from Wyoming to Hawaii and, at West Point, taught artillery tactics and coached basketball. But then his career took a turn that separated him from his peers: he failed to experience combat in World War I. By the time he was sent overseas, the war had ended.

Devers worried that missing out on WWI combat would short-circuit his career. Instead, three achievements in the decades after the war put him on the fast track to professional success. First, in 1925 he graduated from the US Army Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Then, a few years later, he met and impressed Lieutenant Colonel George C. Marshall. Along with other talented young officers such as Eisenhower, Devers became a protégé of Marshall who, in September 1939, would become a full general and the army's chief of staff. Lastly, in 1933, Devers graduated from the US Army War College in Washington, DC.

Thanks largely to Marshall, Devers was promoted to brigadier general in 1940 over the heads of almost 500 officers senior to

The US Office of War Information released this action photo of Lieutenant General Jacob Devers when he was named commander of US Army forces in the European theater, after his predecessor died in a February 1943 plane crash. At age 55, Devers was one of America's top generals.

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him. That October, he was a major general as he took command of the newly formed 9th Infantry Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Less than a year later he was chief of the US Army Armored Force, headquartered at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He supervised the force's expansion from 4 to 16 divisions and drove the development of the M4 Sherman medium tank, which became the most-used Allied tank of World War II.

Devers had never commanded troops in combat, but he was widely regarded as a gifted organizer with a thorough knowledge of strategy, politics, and diplomacy. So as the United States entered a new world war, his career took off like a meteor. By September 1942 Devers was a lieutenant general. In May the next year Marshall gave him command of the army's European theater of operations, where he helped plan Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, France. Devers was seriously considered for command of the Normandy invasion force, but when the job went to Eisenhower, Devers took Ike's place as commanding general in North Africa. He also became deputy supreme Allied commander in the Mediterranean.

### Countrymen but Not Friends

DEVERS AND EISENHOWER had rubbed shoulders during their early careers, mainly at Fort Leavenworth, but were never close. Each respected the other's reputation, and Ike was also aware of Devers's influence with their mentor, Marshall. Now, as the two men interacted at high levels of command in World War II, whatever rapport they had deteriorated fast. Eisenhower held Devers's lack of combat experience against him and dismissed his leadership ability as ".22-caliber." Devers, meanwhile, regarded Ike as a plodder who adhered to outmoded notions of strategy, such as prioritizing the taking of territory rather than seeking out the enemy. At some point, Eisenhower seems to have gotten wind of this, which only sharpened his animus toward Devers.

Two events fed Eisenhower's antipathy toward his rival general. In the summer of 1943, Devers, then in command of the European theater, rejected a request to temporarily transfer four bomber groups from England to North Africa, where Ike was in command. Devers had made the decision after careful consideration, and Marshall supported him (further infuriating Eisenhower). Later, with Devers in Africa and Eisenhower commanding Operation Overlord, Ike wanted a large number of generals transferred from the Mediterranean for leadership in the coming Normandy invasion. Devers released many but held on to others for operations underway in Italy and coming soon in Southern France. Eisenhower bristled.

In the summer of 1944, Devers took charge of the new Sixth Army Group, a mixed command with US and French components. Despite his distaste for Devers, Eisenhower concurred with the assignment. In mid-August, Devers's group initiated Opera-

tion Dragoon, invading Southern France and opening a new Allied front. Charging inland from Riviera landing beaches, American and French units evicted the German occupiers, driving them northward. In early September, already 300 miles from the beaches, Devers's group linked with Patton's Third Army. With that, the Allied front stretched from the English Channel to the Mediterranean Sea.

At this point, Devers's army group came under Eisenhower's command. Henceforth it would have to conform to the plans and orders issued by Ike's Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEP). But Devers retained his own logistical system via the Mediterranean, which granted him a certain degree of independence.

**I**N OCTOBER, elements of Major General Alexander Patch's Seventh Army—the US constituent of Devers's group—encountered German units that were under orders to defend to the death the narrow, treacherous passes through the High Vosges Mountains. Before November ended, Patch's army overwhelmed the fanatical defenders and broke through the Saverne Gap, which linked the northeastern province of Lorraine with the Alsace province farther east. At the same time, Devers's French troops were making significant gains of their own, liberating cities and towns along the southern edge of the Vosges and clearing the industrial area around the city of Belfort.

Any success Devers achieved, Ike chalked up to luck; clearly, the Sixth Army Group wasn't facing Germany's finest, as Bradley's group was. Nevertheless, Devers's men had covered much ground, and suddenly the road into Germany opened to them. By the third week of November, Major General Philippe Leclerc's French 2nd Armored Division, an element of the Seventh Army's XV Corps, was barreling across the Alsatian plain toward Strasbourg, Alsace's capital, on the Rhine River. On the 25th, Leclerc's tanks liberated the city, which had been under Nazi occupation since June 1940.

### Sticking to the Plan

SOON, THE REST OF THE SIXTH ARMY GROUP reached the Rhine a little less than 40 miles north of Strasbourg, across from Rastatt, Germany. It appeared that Devers's command was about to become the first Allied force to enter the enemy's homeland, a prelude to the downfall and death of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Third Reich. Once that occurred, the name of Jacob Devers was sure to vie with those of his SHAEP colleagues for worldwide recognition.

But Eisenhower was running the show in eastern France in late 1944, and his priorities held sway. Above all, he was a staunch and consistent advocate of a broad-front offensive and a unified, coordinated drive toward Germany. He expected Devers to conform his progress to that of his associates to the north, reinforcing and supporting them rather than operating independently.





Eisenhower preferred to break the Siegfried Line—Germany’s western border defenses—on the *northern* Allied flank. He wanted Bradley’s Twelfth Army Group and British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery’s 21st Army Group to cross the Rhine and ravage the Ruhr region, the Nazi war machine’s industrial base. Devers’s group would cross the Rhine at some point, too, but Ike provided no timetable and expected Devers to secure his approval before any launch.

By all indications, then, Eisenhower had relegated Devers’s command to a secondary role. Devers was keenly aware that his group lacked the newsworthiness of the forces serving farther north, which had landed in Normandy on D-Day. Thus he felt a quiet pride in reaching the German border ahead of Bradley, Patton, and Montgomery, whose names and faces appeared in newspapers around the globe. To the frustration of all—especially Eisenhower—rough terrain, muddy roads, and enemy resistance had bogged down the eastward drive of those more famous commanders. In contrast to their halting efforts, Devers’s forces had moved northeastward by consistent, sometimes extraordinary strides.

Devers didn’t have orders *not* to cross the Rhine. After all, getting across that river had always been the plan for the entire Western Allied line, and Eisenhower highlighted it in orders he issued in the summer of 1944. In late September, Devers outlined his overall vision of the Sixth Army Group’s objective in instructions he circulated to his subordinates: the group “...continues the offensive [after the Vosges Mountains campaign], destroys the enemy in its zone of action west of the Rhine, seizes bridgeheads across the Rhine and breaches the Siegfried Line.”

This plan that Devers described “was not a half-baked scheme hatched by field commanders on the fly,” points out David P. Colley, author of the 2008 book *Decision at Strasbourg: Ike’s Strategic Mistake to Halt the Sixth Army Group at the Rhine in 1944*. “On the contrary,” writes Colley, “it was a well-prepared and detailed proposal and a well-rehearsed plan of action produced over a period of nearly three months...and essentially in keeping with the broad scope of Allied military thinking” in Europe.

### Opportunity’s Doorman

PATCH’S VI AND XV CORPS set to work preparing for a crossing toward Rastatt, above Strasbourg. It was an ambitious program. But considering the progress the Sixth Army Group had made thus far, Devers considered it fully achievable.

Devers’s initial plan called for the Seventh Army to begin crossing December 10–20, but by late November the date was moved up

to the first week of December. By then the XV Corps was to have established a bridgehead on the Rhine. The VI Corps would cross and move north, clearing any remaining Germans from the east bank. Patch’s Americans and their comrades in the French First Army of General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny had already caught the German 19th Army, which occupied sections of both banks, in a deadly vise. The Allies had systematically decimated six of the 19th Army’s eight infantry divisions; the other two were holding onto their tenuous positions with crippled fingers.

A brilliant component of Patch’s preparation for the Rhine assault had started all the way back in late September: the formation of river-crossing schools. Engineers set up sites on two rivers in east-central France whose conditions approximated those of the Rhine at Rastatt. There, crossing teams learned to deal with obstacles that included floating mines and aerial defenses.

As the crossing date approached, combat engineers labored to assemble enough DUKWs (amphibious trucks, pronounced “ducks”) and gasoline-powered transports (light and fast, 10-foot-long plywood storm boats and larger assault boats capable of carrying 20 men) to make the crossing as

quickly and smoothly as possible. At the same time, they addressed seemingly every contingency. Seventh Army engineering chief Brigadier General Garrison Davidson doubted that “any other army crossing plans included floating trip wires upstream of its bridges to detonate possible floating mines...or had dummy bridges to dilute the effect of any bombing attack.”

By November 18—a week before the final crossing date set by Devers—everything was in place, thanks to the strenuous efforts of Patch’s engineers, pontoniers, smoke-generators (who created smokescreens to cover troop movements), and other specialists.

Enter General Eisenhower. On November 24, Ike and Bradley visited VI and XV Corps headquarters as part of a two-day tour of the Allied southern front. Devers hadn’t kept SHAEF fully informed of his intentions, and Eisenhower, far from being pleasantly surprised, was alarmed to find crossing preparations so far advanced. Then, and later at Devers’s headquarters at Vittel, France, Ike made clear he wanted the crossing plan scrapped.



DEVERS COULDN’T BELIEVE HIS EARS. “Instead of exploiting a crossing of the Rhine and then proceeding north,” he wrote in his personal journal, Eisenhower “wanted me to throw my force directly to the north to the west of the Rhine and break through the Siegfried Line in conjunction with Patton. Both Patch and I were set to cross the Rhine and we had a clean breakthrough. By driving hard, I feel that we could have accom-

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General Dwight Eisenhower and Devers had much in common. But Ike, the supreme Allied commander, disliked Devers, then leading the Sixth Army Group. Opposite: Visiting Devers’s group near Strasbourg, France, on November 25, 1944, Eisenhower frowns. The group was ready to cross the Rhine River into Germany. Ike said no, to the disbelief of Devers, his generals, and the enemy. Above: Devers in early 1944.

## the General Ike Hated by Edward Longacre

plished our mission.... Eisenhower wanted to change Patton's front; said it was too wide a front; but evidently briefed by Patton, he wanted two divisions transferred to Patton's Army. This I protested vigorously...."

The conference at Vittel lasted into the early hours of the 25th. It was a heated affair. Angry exchanges dominated, including caustic remarks by Bradley, who considered Devers "not very smart, and much too inclined to rush off half-cocked." Ike was "mad as hell" and Devers equally irate.

Eisenhower ended up backing away from taking the two divisions away from Devers. But he adamantly refused to sanction the Rastatt crossing.

### Baffled by a Bad Decision

DEVERS PUT THE BEST FACE ON A BAD SITUATION, writing in his journal that "we will carry on, using what we have to the maximum, and I am sure that with the fine spirit of team play demonstrated every day to me by the individuals on my staff and on the staffs of the two armies under my command..., we shall be a tough combination to lick."

Patton would have instead of playing it safe. Perhaps success would have eliminated any possibility of the Battle of the Bulge, 40,000 casualties there would have been avoided and the war shortened by a number of months...."

When Patton learned what had transpired at Vittel, he quipped that had he been in Devers's shoes, he would have crossed the river and told Ike about it afterward. Even the enemy seemed at a loss to understand Eisenhower's decision. Major General Friedrich von Mellenthin, chief of staff of German Army Group G, which directly opposed Devers's group, marveled that "the whole German defense of the Lower Rhine was collapsing but the Allied leaders would not allow their subordinates to exploit success."

AFTER THE WAR Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, commander of Adolf Hitler's forces in the west, asked Patch why the Seventh Army hadn't crossed, when the Germans there "had nothing to defend with." Patch replied that he and Devers had fully intended to exploit the weakness, and explained how they had planned to do it. Hearing that, the German commander commented that "for a young fellow," the



Devers's men had raced across France after landing on the Riviera in August 1944. Forcing their way through fierce resistance in the Vosges Mountains' Saverne Gap (seen here), they pushed on to the Rhine. Ike said they had advanced so swiftly because they faced weak enemy forces.

Despite the good-soldier rhetoric, Devers's resentment was apparent to all who attended the Vittel conference or were privy to its details. Major General Daniel Noce, who oversaw combat engineering for the Sixth Army Group, wrote that the meeting left Devers wondering aloud if he was "a member of the same team" as Eisenhower.

Devers wasn't the only one shocked and disappointed by Ike's decision. Virtually everyone involved in planning the crossing believed the supreme commander was throwing away a gleaming opportunity to roll up the German line across the river from south to north. Patch insisted that his troops, once across the Rhine, would have swarmed into southern Germany and uprooted the enemy's entire front. General Davidson later spoke for many in the Seventh Army when he estimated what might have happened if "Ike had the audacity to take a calculated risk, as General

55-year-old Patch was quite astute.

Among historians, the consensus has been that Ike blocked the Sixth Army Group crossing for two reasons. First, Devers's bold, proactive strategy clashed with his own preoccupation with shared, measured progress toward the German border. Second, Ike disliked Devers. In the two-volume 1981 study *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany, 1944-1945*, historian Russell F. Weigley notes Eisenhower's "increasingly evident penchant for nagging at Devers and finding fault with almost every move he made. Ike's unwonted coolness toward the 6th Army Group commander went beyond the usual and immediate explanation that Devers, unlike Bradley and Patton, was not an old friend...." Ike's feelings toward Devers, which Weigley contends had a "touch of irrationality," exerted a pernicious long-term effect on Allied operations in France and Germany.





At Strasbourg on November 25, Devers and Ike are grim (right) as General Antoine Béthouart (center) traces his First French Corps's drive across France. General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, French First Army, and Lieutenant General Omar Bradley, US Twelfth Army Group, look on (left).

Eisenhower biographer Carlo D'Este (author of the 2002 book *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*) comments, "When it came to Jake Devers, Eisenhower seemed particularly thin-skinned." Frequent run-ins with other subordinates, chiefly Montgomery, "may have made Eisenhower even less forgiving of Devers's independent attitudes," D'Este theorizes.

### Soldiering On

THERE WOULD BE NO GLORY for the Sixth Army Group in the war's final months. Bowing to Ike's demands, Devers detached elements of the Seventh Army to help de Lattre drive off the last German forces west of the Rhine. Then he led Patch's main body on an arduous northeastward march that brought it into close contact with Patton. In mid-December, when Patton's Third Army turned north to oppose the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes—the Battle of the Bulge—Devers extended his lines almost to the breaking point to cover the shift. Beginning on New Year's Day 1945, Patch's forces met and repulsed Operation Nordwind, the final German offensive of the war.

Devers and Patch fought their way back to the Siegfried Line in February. On March 26, 1945, almost three weeks after Bradley crossed at Remagen and six weeks before Germany's surrender, Eisenhower finally permitted the Seventh Army to bridge the Rhine. Despite prevailing in some of the bitterest fighting of the war, including street-by-street combat in the German city of Heilbronn that April, Patch's command finished the war as what historian and WWII veteran Charles Whiting called "America's Forgotten Army."

Devers had become a full general on March 8, despite Ike's disagreement with the promotion. The fourth star made Devers junior only to Eisenhower among US commanders in Europe, and therefore senior to Bradley and Patton. In June, Devers was appointed chief of US Army Ground Forces, the army's training command. The Stateside assignment appeared worthy of an officer of Devers's rank but, as David Colley points out, it "wrapped him in relative obscurity." Devers remained on active duty until September 1949, when he reached the mandatory retirement age of 62.

**I**N CIVILIAN LIFE Devers and his wife, Georgie, tried their hands at ranching in West Virginia. Later he accepted a number of business positions, most notably as technical assistant to the president of Fairchild Aircraft. He died in October 1979 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Devers's postwar relations with Ike had remained strained until 1954, when Eisenhower, then president, named him to a series of prestigious posts, including chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Unfortunately, the rapprochement came a decade too late. It failed to erase the memory of a rancorous personal relationship, one that scuttled an opportunity to shorten the war in Europe and save the lives of countless men. ★

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EDWARD G. LONGACRE, a retired US Air Force historian and author of numerous books, has written frequently for *America* in WWII about the Sixth Army Group's 100th Infantry Division, in which his father served.

# WONDER DRUGS FOR VICTORY

America's arsenal of democracy gave the Allies not only death-dealing weapons of war, but also cutting-edge, lifesaving antibiotics.

by Mark Weisenmiller

**S**OVIET PREMIER JOSEPH STALIN WAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY GENEROUS TOWARD the United States one evening during the November-December 1943 Tehran Conference at the Soviet embassy in Iran's capital. At dinner, he praised the Americans for their Lend-Lease program, which sent war supplies to nations battling the Axis powers. To President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and the gathered staffs of the Soviet, American, and British heads of state, Stalin announced (optimistically, considering the war was not yet over), "Without American production, the United Nations [the Allies] could never have won the war."

Most of what Lend-Lease supplied was military hardware: tanks, ships, planes, and weapons. That was what Stalin had in mind. But there was another American product that not only helped secure Allied victory, but also changed the fate of countless people around the world for decades to come: antibiotics.

Antibiotics unquestionably saved the lives of tens of thousands of civilians and military during World War II. In an era when it was all too common for people to die from infections, antibiotics were wonder drugs. And, for the most part, they were American-made.

One reason for US dominance in the production of these new cutting-edge, germ-fighting drugs during World War II was government regulation. Roosevelt, whose polio and other health problems kept him on numerous medications, had taken a personal interest in assuring the quality of US pharmaceuticals, and in the 1930s he backed legislation to accomplish this goal. One such law was the 1938 Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, which established federal oversight over drug quality and safety, and required drug companies to follow strict regulations in research and development.

Another reason for US leadership in antibiotic production was money. The United States was the only Allied country whose economy was robust enough to support R&D for the wonder drugs. If

America ever had a pharmaceutical rival, it was, for a short time, Nazi Germany, whose massive nationwide militarization kicked its economy into overdrive—until the war brought it crumbling down. In the end, antibiotics developed in Germany would be appropriated by US pharmaceutical companies and manufactured for Allied use.



## Antibiotics 101

WHAT, PRECISELY, IS AN ANTIBIOTIC? It can be any of a variety of substances, usually derived from microorganisms, that slows or stops the growth of other microorganisms. Antibiotics can be classified in all sorts of ways, based on their active ingredients and the types of microorganisms against which they are most effective.

Most of us know from personal experience that antibiotics are administered by injection (the form often used by WWII medics and nurses), swallowed (think penicillin tablets), or applied to the skin via ointment. Many antibiotics are also powerful allergens. The most common example of this is penicillin, which can cause everything from a skin rash to life-threatening shock. If misused, antibiotics can cause superinfections by enabling harmful bacteria to develop resistance.

All of the above had to be taught to and learned by military doctors and nurses and the many thousands of airmen, sailors,

LEFT: NATIONAL ARCHIVES. OPPOSITE: MERCK AND COMPANY

Above: The drug that changed the world: penicillin, made by US pharmaceutical firm Pfizer in time for the June 1944 Normandy invasion. Penicillin was the most important of five antibiotics that saved thousands of Allied lives in World War II. Opposite: Lab worker Gertrude McAndrews tests streptomycin at Merck and Company in January 1945. First isolated in 1943, streptomycin worked against tuberculosis.







## WONDER DRUGS FOR VICTORY by Mark Weisenmiller

and soldiers who would serve as medics (marines medics were navy hospital corpsmen). The effort paid off in the form of increased chances of survival for wounded servicemen.

### America's WWII Antibiotics

THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY manufactured five antibiotics for use by the US forces during the Second World War. Here they are, in alphabetical order, with one postwar drug added because of its connections to war-era pharmaceutical development:

**Atabrine:** A synthetic antibiotic developed by the German pharmaceutical company Bayer in 1931, Atabrine (the trade name for mepacrine, also called quinacrine) was the first manmade substitute for quinine, the anti-malarial drug of choice at that time. It was a timely discovery, because Japanese conquest of the Philippines and Indonesia in late 1941 and early 1942 cut off the Allies' access to cinchona bark, essential to making quinine. American-made Atabrine was administered to US servicemen in North Africa and the South Pacific to protect them from the ever-present threat of malaria.

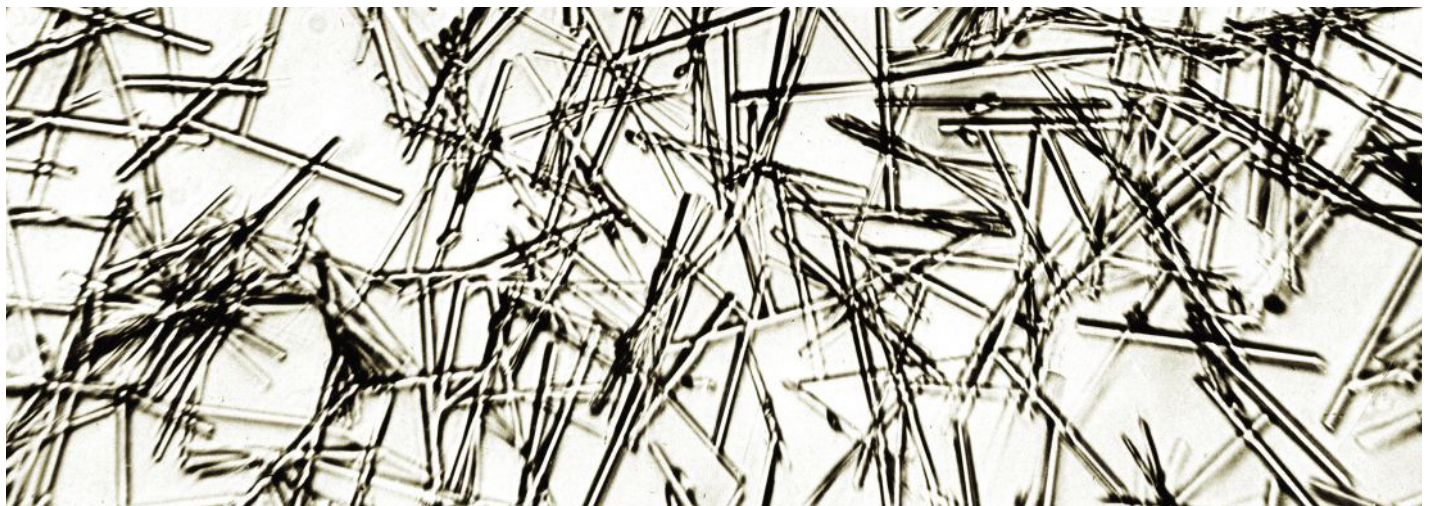
Author James Michener memorialized the drug with a fictional character named Atabrine Benny in his 1947 Pulitzer Prize-winning

NCOs [noncommissioned officers] from the combat units stood at the head of mess lines to carefully watch marines and soldiers take their little yellow tablets."

**Gramicidin:** Many antibiotics originate from bacteria living in the soil, and gramicidin is one of them. It traces back to a bacillus found in things that rot in the ground, though the same organism can also be found in air, soil, and water. Gramicidin is one of World War II's less remembered antibiotics. Often used to treat eye infections, it is also found in most bacitracin-polymyxin antibiotic creams.

French-born microbiologist René J. Dubos, working with biochemist Rollin Hotchkiss, discovered gramicidin in the United States in 1939. The pair isolated both gramicidin and tyrothricin (a topical antibiotic) from *Bacillus brevis*. Both of these were among the first antibiotics to be mass-produced.

**Penicillin:** The most common and best known antibiotic of the Second World War was penicillin. Many people know the story of how Sir Alexander Fleming (a talented Scottish biologist, botanist, physician, and pharmacologist) went on vacation in 1928 and accidentally left a *staphylococcus* bacteria culture in an uncovered



LEFT & OPPOSITE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

compendium of short stories, *Tales of the South Pacific*. A good-hearted scamp, Benny was a pharmacist's assistant during his civilian life in Texas, but while stationed in the New Hebrides Islands, he somehow convinces everyone that he is a doctor. He is loved by all because he gives Atabrine tablets to anyone who wants them.

In reality, patients who took Atabrine had so many complaints about its many negative side effects that they found nothing funny about it. The yellow pills reportedly had a bitter taste, and it was not uncommon for patches of a patient's skin to turn yellow after ingestion of the drug. Other negative side effects were diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting.

"Yet Atabrine was effective, if only the men could be made to take it," notes author David Steinert in "The History of WWII Medicine," an article on his World War II Combat Medic website ([www.mtaofnj.org/content/WWII Combat Medic - Dave Steinert/index.htm](http://www.mtaofnj.org/content/WWII%20Combat%20Medic%20-%20Dave%20Steinert/index.htm)). "A great part of the problem was that the proper dosage had not yet been worked out. In an effort to ensure that the Atabrine was actually swallowed by the soldiers, medics or

Petri dish. When Fleming returned, he noticed that mold was growing on the culture and that the *staphylococcus* had died all around the edges of the mold. Something in the mold—Fleming called it "mould juice"—had killed the bacteria.

Eventually, Fleming identified the mold as a *Penicillium* fungus. Renaming his "mould juice," he announced the discovery of penicillin in March 1929. His announcement garnered little interest at first. But little by little, experiments in treating various infections brought attention to the new drug.

By 1941, a team of biologists working in England, led by E.B. Chain and Sir H.W. Florey, developed a mass-production process for penicillin and set to work convincing US pharmaceutical companies to manufacture the new medicine. The drug-maker Merck and Company set to work. But by 1942 only enough penicillin to treat a handful of patients was available (especially because early penicillin left the body via urination within hours).

The military phased in penicillin as fast as it became available. Historian Andre Sobocinski of the US Navy Bureau of Medicine





and Surgery described for *America in WWII* how that process worked in the navy. “Penicillin first became available for use at selected naval hospitals in 1943 [Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Mare Island, San Diego, and Oakland, California; St. Albans, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Portsmouth, Virginia; and Seattle, Washington] and by the fall was available to naval forces in the Pacific and Atlantic theaters,” he said. “Units deployed into theaters would also be supplied with requisite supplies.”

**B**Y THE TIME THE ALLIES LAUNCHED the Normandy invasion in France in June 1944, 2.3 million doses of penicillin from Merck, Pfizer, Lederle, Squibb, Abbott Laboratories, and 16 other US drug companies were available to treat casualties. At first, only a small amount of penicillin was allotted for non-military patients on the home front, but as production increased, the lifesaving medicine became a regular treatment for civilians, too.

Not surprisingly, Chain, Florey, and Fleming together received the 1945 Nobel Prize for Medicine for their work on this wonder drug. The discovery of benzylpenicillin (the chemical name for the 1928 original variety of penicillin) and its subsequent variants has saved the lives of millions of people. In World War II, it saved countless men from amputations or death resulting from infected combat wounds, illness, and accidents. For example, while bacte-

rial pneumonia claimed the lives of 18 percent of servicemen who contracted it in World War I, it killed only 1 percent of its victims in World War II, thanks to penicillin. Penicillin also saved men from less honorable infections: venereal diseases. Sobocinski notes, “Beginning in 1944, penicillin therapy replaced sulfa drugs [see below] as the go-to treatment of venereal diseases (especially gonorrhea) at naval hospitals.”

**Streptomycin:** Originally isolated by American biochemists Albert Schatz and Selman A. Waksman in 1943, streptomycin was “the first antibiotic effective against tuberculosis,” as stated on the 1952 Nobel Prize notice. It was actually Schatz who isolated streptomycin while working in Waksman’s laboratory, and just how much Waksman contributed has never been completely clear. As a result, the relationship between the two biochemists deteriorated until Schatz sued Waksman over royalties from the release of the drug. The lawsuit, though acrimonious, was settled out of court.

To this day, streptomycin is a major antibiotic used against tuberculosis. Streptomycin does its work by slowing protein synthesis and by destroying cell membranes in certain microorganisms. It isn’t faultless: side effects can include kidney damage, nerve damage, and even deafness. The last of these would befall Corporal Desmond Doss, a conscientious objector who served as

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Opposite: Under a microscope, a sample of streptomycin in a medically useful crystalline form looks like a glass sculpture. Above: Second Lieutenant Ella M. David, an army nurse, injects Staff Sergeant Willis Jenkins with penicillin at a field hospital in Normandy, France, in January 1945. The miracle drug had a shortcoming: it stayed in the body only a few hours before being flushed out in the patient’s urine.







## WONDER DRUGS FOR VICTORY by Mark Weisenmiller

an army medic with the 77th Infantry Division in the Pacific and earned the Medal of Honor. In 1976, Doss was given too much streptomycin during a visit to a Veterans Administration facility in Atlanta and completely lost his hearing. Fortunately, in 1988 he received a cochlear implant that allowed him to hear again.

**Sulfa drugs:** From the first moments of World War II, the US military used sulfa drugs (short for sulfonamide) to help injured personnel beat infections. Sobocinski explains, “Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, naval medical personnel attached to the Naval Hospital Pearl Harbor and Mobile Hospital No. 2 and aboard the hospital ship USS *Solace* [AH-5] used sulfanilamide [the active ingredient in sulfa drugs] (powder form) to treat compound fractures, infections, and burns (using sulfa powder mixed with mineral oil). Sulfanilamide was also administered orally after initial treatment of infections.”

The man who more or less discovered sulfa drugs was German chemist and pathologist Gerhard Domagk (1895–1964), director of research for I.G. Farben Industries at the Bayer lab in Wuppertal in the early 1930s. Domagk knew that dyes are quick to match up with bacterial cells, and his research led him to believe the right form of dye might be able to attach to undesirable bacteria and stop an infection. So he invented a red dye that became known by the trade name Prontosil and tested it on mice. When his daughter developed a life-threatening fever, he injected her with the dye, too. Her fever broke and she quickly recovered. Prontosil became the precursor to all sulfa drugs when a team of scientists discovered that the dye actually broke down inside the body, releasing a bacteria-fighting ingredient: sulfanilamide.

In 1939, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine went to Domagk, but Adolf Hitler refused to allow him to go to Sweden and claim it. Instead, the Nazis arrested and briefly jailed him. Two years after the war, in 1947, Domagk received his Nobel Prize gold medal, but the accompanying monetary award had expired.

Sulfa drugs proliferated, prescribed by physicians to stop meningitis as well as pneumonia. Author Thomas Hager, in his 2006 book about Domagk, *The Demon under the Microscope: From Battlefield Hospitals to Nazi Labs, One Doctor's Heroic Search for the World's First Miracle Drug*, notes that sulfa saved the lives of Franklin Roosevelt's son and Winston Churchill.

Churchill caught pneumonia while in Tunisia in 1943. Returning to England healthy due to sulfa treatments, he joked with reporters that he was happy to learn he could take sulfa with his favorite beverage: brandy.

If Churchill's press conference was a shot in the arm for the reputation of sulfa drugs, Franklin Roosevelt Jr.'s story was even better publicity. In November 1936, Roosevelt's 22-year-old son

entered Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital with an acute streptococcus infection. When his condition dangerously worsened, his mother, Eleanor, authorized the physician to administer sulfa drugs. The young Roosevelt recovered, and on December 17, 1936, the *New York Times* announced, “Young Roosevelt Saved by New Drug.” The news spread to other publications and was read by millions of people.

**Tetracyclines:** Tetracyclines arrived in America's pharmaceutical arsenal shortly after World War II, but were a product of the surge in antibiotics research in the 1930s and 1940s, and of the quest to find solutions to infections other antibiotics could not combat.

Created by bacteria of the genus *Streptomyces*, the tetracyclines are used to treat all sorts of maladies: acne; infections of the eye, intestinal, respiratory, or urinary tracts; and even Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Some are used to fight microorganisms that are resistant to penicillin. Today, some tetracyclines are losing their usefulness because certain strains of bacteria have developed resistance to them.

Ironically, the man who discovered the very first tetracycline antibiotic—chlortetracycline, known by the trade name Aureomycin—wasn't a medical researcher. Benjamin M. Duggar, better known for his work as a plant physiologist, uncovered chlortetracycline while working with the soil bacterium *Streptomyces aureofaciens*.

Another notable American scientist who did historic work on tetracyclines was Boston-born Robert B. Woodward. A founding father of research into synthesizing artificial laboratory versions of pharmaceutical substances found in nature, Woodward was an advisor to the US War Production Board on the

development of penicillin. In 1944, with the help of a researcher, he synthesized manmade quinine for malaria treatment, bypassing the need for by-then-scarce cinchona bark. After the discovery of a second type of tetracycline, oxytetracycline, Woodward's research pinpointed the drug's molecular structure, allowing it to be made synthetically. For his lifetime work in synthesizing organic molecules, Woodward received the 1965 Nobel Prize for Chemistry.

JUST AS HUMANS HOPED the Great War of the early 1900s would be, as British author H.G. Wells wrote, “the war to end war,” a later generation hoped the antibiotics developed in the 1930s and 1940s would eradicate many diseases once and for all. But time has proven that the quest for wonder drugs, like the quest for peace, will ever be a work in progress. ★

MARK WEISENMILLER is an author-reporter living and working in Tampa, Florida.



Opposite: Medics practice on a mock casualty at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, in April 1943. They are using the state-of-the-art antibiotic of that time, sulfanilamide, pouring it on the fake wound. Above: Before penicillin, sulfa drugs were the best defense against bacteria at the front and on the home front.



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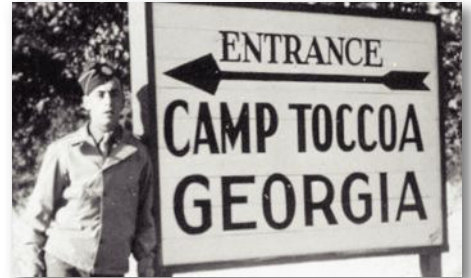


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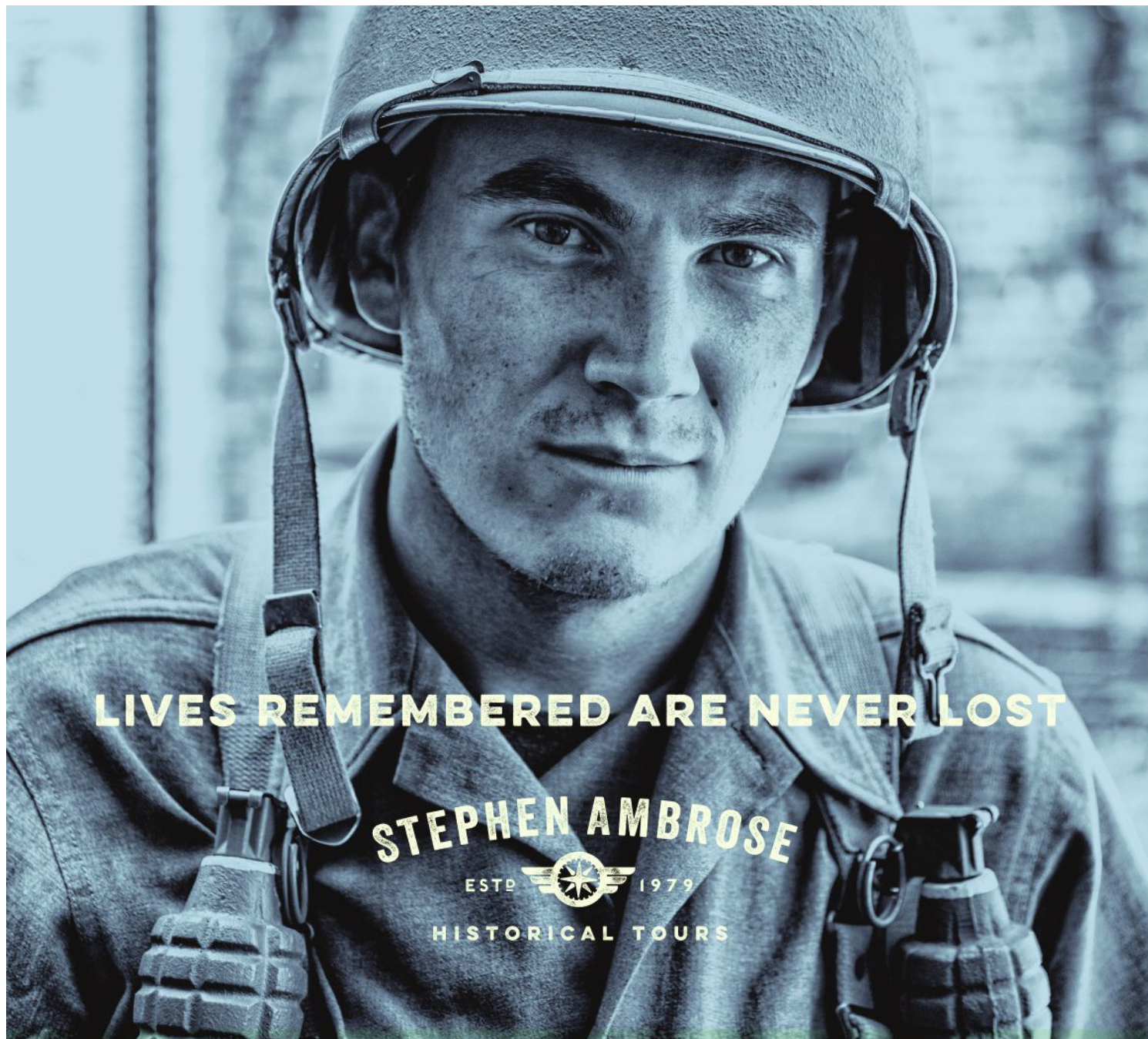
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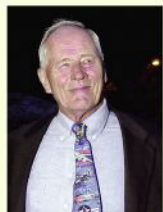


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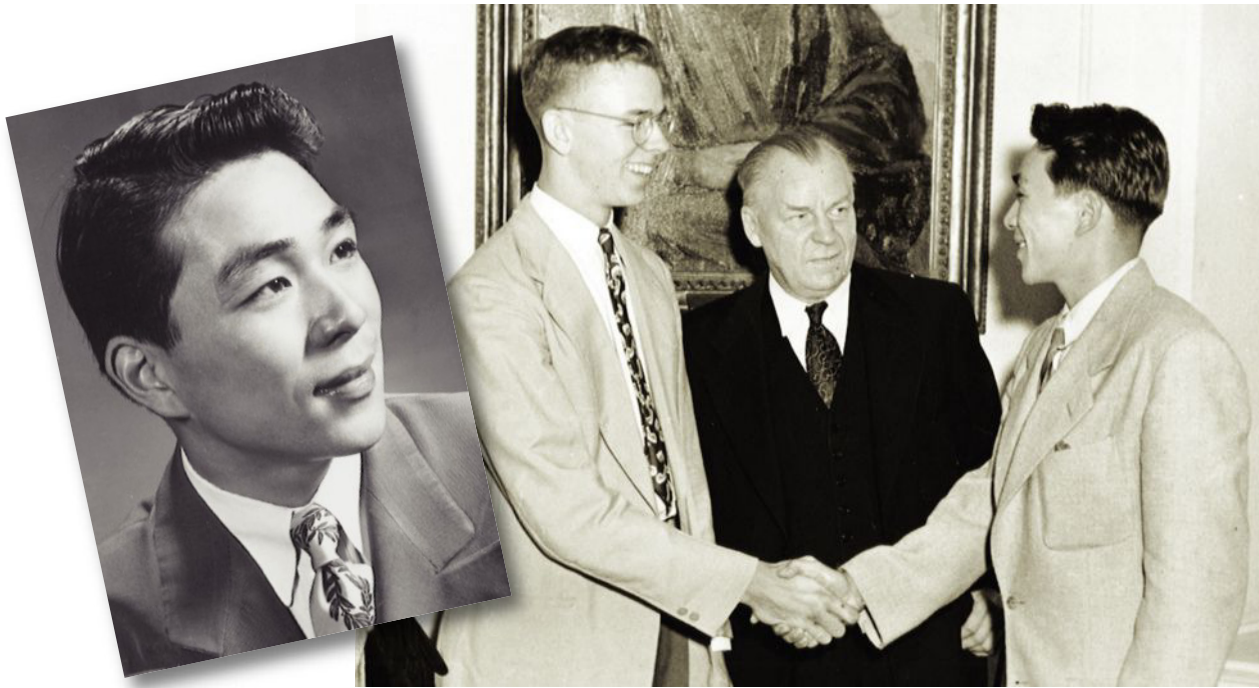
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## A SECOND CHANCE

**Y**ES, I KNEW A kamikaze Japanese pilot. He was a classmate of mine at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. His name: Robert Nishiyama. We used to study together at the library. He graduated in the class of 1952.

I asked him why he was ready to be a suicide pilot in World War II. He said, "Because we were taught to die for the emperor, and our country. And at the time, I believed all that." He wouldn't make that pledge again, he hinted.

He died a few years ago and the Lafayette alumni magazine had a big feature article with photos of some of his relatives published, not too long ago.

*Nishiyama arrived at Lafayette thanks to the family of Robert S. Johnstone, a Lafayette student who served in the US Army during World War II. Johnstone was*

*killed in May 1945 during combat with Japanese forces near the Ipo Dam, part of the water supply of Manila, capital of the Philippines. His family offered the \$10,000 in life insurance benefits they received to create a full scholarship for one Japanese student, in hopes it would work toward reconciliation.*

*"I don't think we are going to have peace by settling the war with hate and hard terms," said Johnstone's father. "We are trying to do our small share by helping other people to keep the peace."*

*The scholarship went to Nishiyama, who had never gotten to fly his fatal kamikaze mission. Nishiyama got to know the Johnstones well during his years at Lafayette. He graduated in 1952. The college continues to offer the Johnstone scholarship.*

THE VERY REVEREND DANIEL RESSETAR  
Lafayette College class of 1951  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

## BEGINNING OF THE END, PART 3

*In our last issue, we followed army message center chief Arthur S. Church and his fellow soldiers as they celebrated Japan's surrender and waited for word on when they would be able to return home from Saipan. While waiting, they explored the island. Church and some other men stopped at a post exchange for beer and cigarettes, only to discover something unexpected in the nearby underbrush.*

**A**FTER A WHILE the vines fell aside to reveal a boot. We jumped up, pulled the vines apart, and found the remains of a marine. But for us, who knows how long he might have lain undiscovered.

So time dragged on. People began to ship out. I can't remember any of the men with whom I was well acquainted coming around to say they were going. I don't even remember being aware that my two best

Top, left: Ex-kamikaze Robert Yukimasa Nishiyama sat for a 1952 senior photo at Pennsylvania's Lafayette College. Top, right: He was there thanks to the family of Robert Johnstone, a GI killed in Asia in 1945. Here, Nishiyama greets Johnstone's brother and father.

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## ★ WAR STORIES

friends, Earl Cahill and Chet Spink, were leaving.

As for my crew, I believe it was several months before anyone left. John Weston, one of my men, left the depot and transferred to an artillery outfit on the island, but as for the rest I don't know.

Finally we received orders to vacate our barracks and move into tents in one of the company areas. I moved my stuff into a tent, but I don't think I ever actually slept there. That may have been about the 10th or 11th of January [1946]. About the 12th or 13th, my ankle began to hurt. By lunchtime I could barely walk. I asked someone to bring me some chow and had a call made to our dispensary to let them know I was crippled. After a few minutes, an ambulance arrived and I was hauled to a hospital.

It didn't take very long to X-ray my ankle and find that there was no fracture. But they couldn't find any other reason for my pain. So I was sitting in the waiting room, waiting for the ambulance to return me to camp, when a man came running into the room, and I mean *running*, calling my name. Seeing me, he said, "Sarge, come

on, you are going home! Let's go. They're already loading!"

I hobbled out of the hospital as best I could and away we went. I was really stunned, but on the way I brought up all the reasons why I couldn't go.

"I can't walk."

"Don't worry. We will get you on board."

Another good reason: "I haven't packed my stuff."

He said, "The guys are taking care of that."

I thought of other things. I had always believed that when one's time was up, he would be on orders for a week or so ahead of time. But true enough, when we arrived at our new tent locations, there were a lot of trucks loading.

Someone had my duffle bag standing by as I hobbled out of the ambulance. I expected someone to ask, "Why is this man coming in an ambulance?" But it didn't happen. Is it not strange that only as I write this, reminded by what I just wrote about moving, do I realize that my duffel bag was already packed because I had never gone to the tent to unpack?

I hobbled to the last truck in line, where they pulled and shoved me aboard. I had no time to say "Thank you" or even "Goodbye, it has been fun knowing you all these years." I continued to worry that someone would notice I was a cripple and I would be bumped.

But this was what I had been waiting for. As the trucks began to move out, I looked back and saw men I had served with for two years, and a feeling of sadness came over me. There was a feeling I would never see them again, and that has proven to be true. However, I didn't let that bother me for long. I was headed home!

ARTHUR S. CHURCH  
*wartime army message center chief  
on Saipan, Marianas  
Ukiah, California*



### 1940s GI and civilian patter

**bags of mystery:** *sausages—  
GIs preferred to remain ignorant  
of the ingredients*

**canned morale:** *movies—instant,  
if brief, escapes from hard times*

**dit happy:** *the radioman's curse—  
Morse Code ringing in the head  
after a busy workday*

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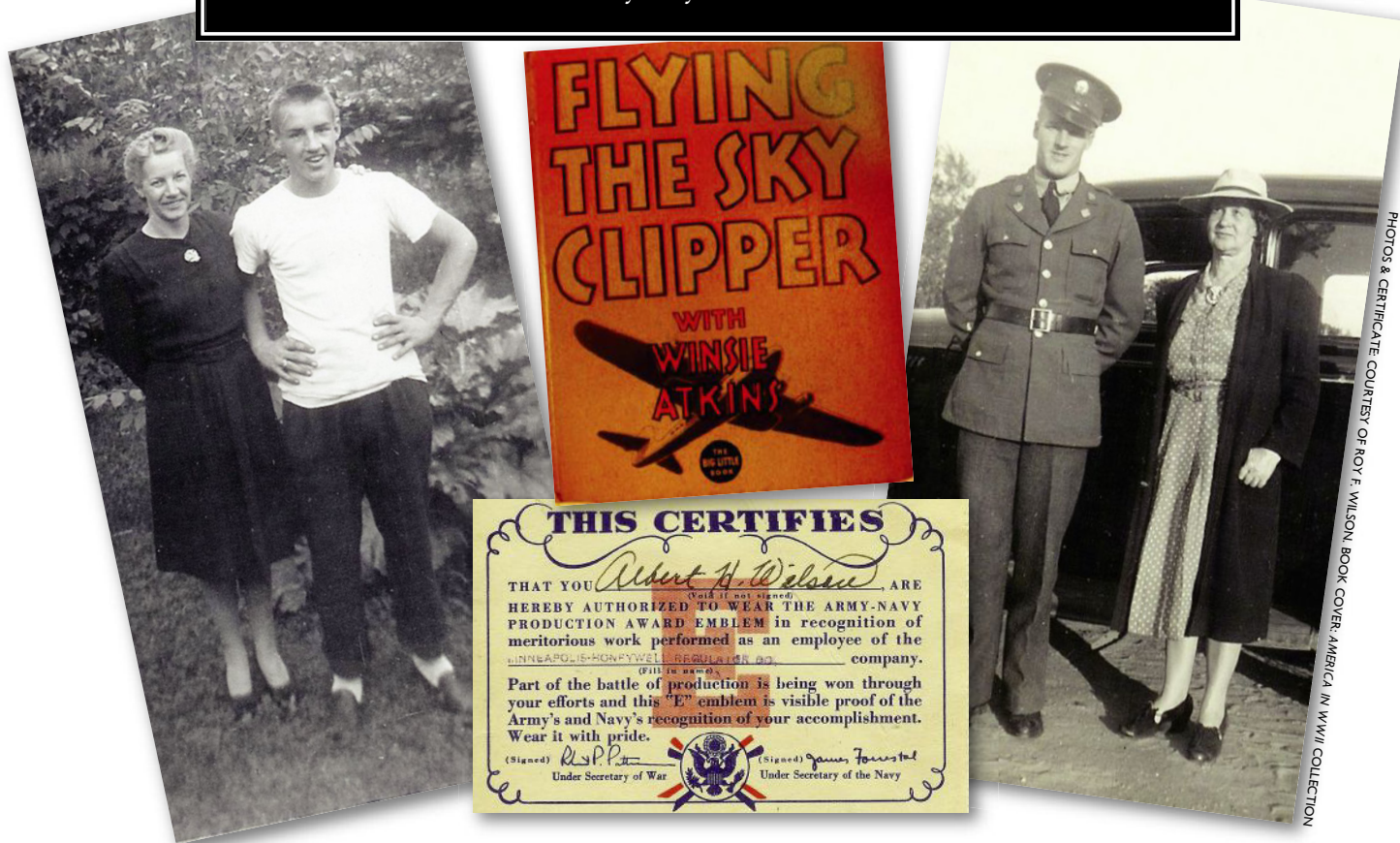




I WAS THERE

# War in the Land of 10,000 Lakes

by Roy F. Wilson



PHOTOS & CERTIFICATE COURTESY OF ROY F. WILSON BOOK COVER: AMERICA IN WWII COLLECTION

**O**N DECEMBER 7, 1941, I WAS 12, a Minnesota farm kid who ate, slept, and breathed airplanes. I yearned to become a fighter pilot. My two older brothers were already in the army. One, Jim, had enlisted in September 1940. The other, Harold, was drafted in March 1941.

Anticipating the possibility of war, America's first peacetime draft began in October 1940. It called for 12 months of service and was unpopular. We weren't at war. The war was in Europe, not here, so why did we need a draft? Adding insult to injury, in summer 1941, we still were not at war, but Congress extended the period to 18 months. Early draftees threatened mutiny and swore to hold the government to its original promise of 12 months. They began marking their barracks walls with the letters O.H.I.O., letters that stood for their slogan "Over the Hill in October."

At the end, few actually deserted. My enlistee brother was a soldier by choice, so he was stuck, in any case. My draftee brother had advanced rapidly and was having too much fun training new soldiers to think of desertion.

Then war came. Early morning December 7, the radio crackled with the report "Japs attack Pearl Harbor." Few knew where Pearl Harbor was, but I did. I had a Big Little Book (ask someone who's over 85 what that is) called *Flying the Sky Clipper*. [Editor's note: In case you don't have immediate access to someone over 85, Big Little Books was a series of thick volumes roughly four inches high by four inches wide featuring text on the left-hand page of each spread and an illustration on the right.] Its hero, a 12-year-old boy named Winsie Atkins, had an adventure at the US naval base at Pearl Harbor. When I first read the book I thought the

Clockwise from above, left: Roy Wilson with his sister Dorothy, who worked as an electrician building Liberty Ships during the war; this Little Big Book inspired young Roy to want to be a fighter pilot; Roy's brother Harold (shown with their mom) trained George Patton's men before the 1942 North Africa invasion; Roy's dad earned this certificate for his war-factory work.

place was fictional. December 7 showed me it was real. When I told others what I knew, few believed me. Indeed, some neighbors laughed out loud when I told them. Who listens to a 12-year-old kid about a war starting? But then they turned on the radio.

My 54-year-old father was already working overtime in a defense plant, and one of my sisters, Susie, was a guard at an ammunition factory. Another sister, Myra, had crafted a service flag to hang in our window (white field, red border, with two blue stars, one for each of my brothers in the service). Later, one star was reworked to the color silver when Jim went overseas to invade the Aleutian Islands. [A blue star was sometimes made silver to represent a GI shipped to a war zone.] My mother began volunteering for the Red Cross, reprising a role she played in the First World War.

On December 8 my businessman brother-in-law, Lyman, too old for the draft but unwilling to be outdone by his younger brothers-in-law, enlisted in the navy. His wife, my eldest sister, Dorothy, began an electrician apprenticeship in one of Henry Kaiser's Columbia River shipyards building Liberty Ships. I had a newspaper route, and I was in the Boy Scouts, which was instrumental in the wartime recycling drives for scrap metal, paper, used tires, cooking fats, clothing, etc.

Our small farm dated to the 19th century, and bits of worn-out farm machinery were scattered about, including the hulk of an ancient Ford Model T that sat in a swampy section of our pasture. During the first scrap drive an eager crew of scavengers nearly filled their truck with our rusty iron trash, now valuable as raw material for war production. To my surprise, four husky young men hoisted up the derelict Model T body and carried it on their shoulders through the pasture and up to the road where their truck waited.

By then, all of my family was engaged in some kind of war service, as were many other families. We Americans were pulling together.

The war moved on and the nation was concerned. We were losing as the enemy advanced across the Pacific, but we hunkered down with patriotic songs to buoy us. One contained the verse "Let's remember Pearl Harbor as we did the Alamo." I could sing that song all the way through today. And these brave words in another song: "We

## ★ I WAS THERE

did it before, and we can do it again." Brave words indeed, bravado; the Nazis owned the continent of Europe, and the Japanese were closing in on our Pacific possessions.

But the enemy had not reckoned with the American spirit and our industrial might. An example of the latter was the B-24 Liberator, a large, four-engine heavy bomber designed before the war by the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation. By war's end, we had produced almost 19,000 B-24s. They were built in five different plants, but Henry Ford's purpose-built



Roy Wilson's brother Jim with their dad. Jim, a prewar army enlistee, participated in the Aleutian Islands invasion in 1942.

Willow Run plant near Ypsilanti, Michigan, turned out one bomber per hour (650 units per month) at peak production. Ford broke ground to build that factory on April 18, 1941, and the first plane was completed September 10, 1942. By war's end that single plant had built nearly half of the 19,000 B-24s produced.

There is only one operating example of that bomber left today. Owned by the Collings Foundation, it tours the United States with its sister ship, a WWII B-17 Flying Fortress, as part of that organization's Wings of Freedom Tour. Go see them if you can and ponder the size and complexity of that B-24 while you consider that during

World War II, one of those large and complicated machines rolled out of a single American factory, one per hour, 24 hours a day, every day, for months on end.

How long and complicated must that production line have been? How many people must have worked on that line to build the machine? How were so many ordinary, unskilled citizens trained to produce that complicated artifact in such a short time? How, indeed, but we did it in that and a thousand other shops and factories throughout this land.

When the Japanese attacked we stopped building autos and converted our factories to produce war materiel. From planes to tanks to jeeps to guns and ammunition, our industrial capacity was converted to producing goods needed to fight the war. My father worked for Minneapolis-Honeywell, a company then best known for manufacturing thermostats for home furnaces. That company's skilled engineers developed, among other wartime products, an electronic autopilot that was vital for Allied aircraft.

Time passed and Jim participated in an amphibious landing to drive the Japanese out of the Aleutian Islands. Harold trained [Major] General George Patton's army [the 34,000-man Western Task Force] in the California desert, preparing it for the invasion of Africa [which would launch in November 1942]. When that task was finished he attended OCS [Officer Candidate School] to be commissioned in the Medical Service Corps and become a hospital administrator. (Don't ask me why an infantry first sergeant chose that branch of service to become an officer.) Soon after he was commissioned he came down with Valley Fever (*coccidioidomycosis*), a fungal infection endemic to the California desert, his reward for bivouacking on that desert over two years while training other soldiers. Hospitalized for months, he had half of one lung removed before he returned to duty.

Lyman was a pharmacist's mate on a ship in the Pacific, and my sisters at home [Myra and Susie] were encouraged by our mother to migrate west for better opportunity. More likely, mother wanted them there to keep our married sister on the straight and narrow while her husband served in the Pacific.

They moved as mother asked, and Myra began volunteering in the Portland,

COURTESY OF ROY F. WILSON



Oregon, Veterans Administration hospital, a role she continued all her life, long after World War II ended. Susie found work in a small machine shop and learned to make miniature electrical transformers for military applications, a skill she followed the rest of her working life.


The tide began to turn as the Japanese advance was halted at the Battle of Midway [in June 1942]. The brave words of that early patriotic song began to have real meaning as the US Army Air Forces began bombing Europe, our production of war materiel was supplying Allied forces, and our own buildup of troops and materiel in England threatened to sink the islands under its weight as we prepared to invade the Continent.

I still ate, slept, and breathed airplanes. They trained navy pilots at the Minneapolis airport, and each morning a roaring cloud of yellow biplanes came out and took stations over our farm to practice. They flew a training maneuver called "pylon eights" [tracing figure eights around points roughly indicated by two pylons on the ground] with our windmill as one pylon. I could appraise their developing skill by sitting at the base of the windmill and sighting up their wings as they turned.

At noon the trainers returned to the airport to be replaced after lunch by another group that would return at dusk. I watched and dreamed of flying with them.

After school, older boys flew model airplanes in our field and I would run out to watch them. At dusk one day, a yellow trainer circled low over us. Our hearts skipped when something hurtled from the cockpit, and we ran leaping through the tall grass to retrieve the object, a wondrously soft leather flying glove. A note inside said the pilot's name was Bruce Walters. He built model planes, and we should call him. Thrilled and tongue-tied I talked on the telephone with my first real aviator but I didn't get to meet him.

Our farmhouse sat on a bluff above a creek valley, and one day from across the creek I saw a yellow biplane dive into that hollow so low that when he pulled up I could see the house above his wings. Again and again he dove. It must have been Bruce, and desperately I ran to wave to him but when I got there he was gone. A pilot had put on a show for me and I had missed that most important event of my entire life.

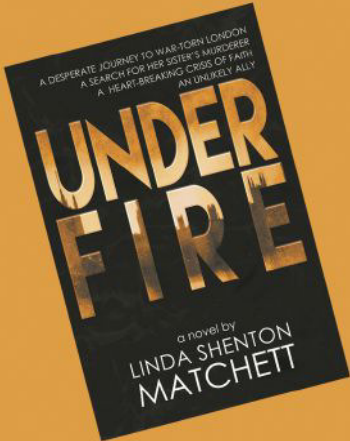

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## A WWII MYSTERY


Ruth Brown follows clues about her sister's disappearance from New Hampshire to London and uncovers activities of smugglers, resistance fighters and the IRA—all of whom may want her dead.

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2. Publication Number: 1554-5296. 3. Filing Date: 12/5/2017. 4. Issue Frequency: This period: Dec/Jan, Feb/Mar, Apr/May, June, Jul/Aug, Sept/Oct. Number of Issues Published Annually: Six. 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$41.94. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 310 Publishing LLC, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125. Contact Person: Heidi Kushlan. Telephone: 717-977-3926. 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: Same as above. 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher, James P. Kushlan, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125; Editor, Carl Zebrowski, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125; Managing Editor, none. 10. Owner: 310 Publishing, LLC, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125; Heidi T. & James P. Kushlan, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125; Kathryn & Richard Szarko, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125; Christine & Paul Smith, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125; Concetta R. Futchko, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125; Paul & Donna Miller, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125; Beverly Fowler-Conner, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, Dauphin County, PA 17109-3125. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. 13. Publication Title: America in WWII. 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 10/01/2017. 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months/Nearest Single Issue. 15.a. Total Number of Print Copies: 22,567/22,000. 15.b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail). (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541: 13,738/14,141. (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS: 3,145/3,181. (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS: 122/107. 15.c. Total Paid Print Distribution: 17,005/17,429. 15.d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail). (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541: 30/31. (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: 38/30. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail: 45/10. 15.e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution: 113/71. 15.f. Total Print Distribution: 17,118/17,500. 15.g. Copies Not Distributed: 5,449/4,500. 15.h. Total Print Copies: 22,567/22,000. 15.i. Percent Paid: 99.3%/99.6%. 16. Electronic Copy Circulation. 16.a. Paid Electronic Copies: 2,012/1,900. 16.b. Total Paid Print Copies + Paid Electronic Copies: 19,017/19,329. 16.c. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies: 19,130/19,400. 16.d. Percent Paid: 99.4%/99.6%. 17. Publication of Statement of Ownership: Will be printed in the 2/1/2018 issue of this publication. 17. I certify that all information on this form is true and complete. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner:  
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## I WAS THERE

I tried to call Bruce again but his class was finished and he had shipped out. Yet today I regret being gone when he flew over. I still wonder what became of him. Did he complete his training? Did he survive the war? Or was the buzz job on our farmhouse his swan song as a naval aviator?

By 1944, I had progressed from a paper route that paid \$8 a week in commissions to a salaried paper station manager job at \$6 a week—less money, more prestige, and less work. I had to get up earlier, but I didn't have to dun my customers, prospect for new ones, or slog through miserable weather twice daily delivering 100-plus newspapers.

I still participated in war-supportive activities as called upon by my scouting membership and by our church and school. I remember one clothing drive, probably to benefit refugees. In one wealthy neighborhood we collected a lot of high-quality men's clothing. Some of the homes had gold-star service flags in their windows signifying a family member who would never return from military service. It sobered us. We were of the *hoi polloi* and hadn't really considered that rich folks might be suffering too, though that level of participation is rare today.

My newspaper carriers were an eclectic bunch of pre- and early teens. Two musicians argued incessantly about the relative difficulty of the saxophone and the cornet, and there were a couple of unabashed toughs. One kid's father owned a candy company, and he held himself above the rest of us. All were obstreperous, and resistant to authority, especially from someone smaller than some, as I was, and junior in age. I quickly learned to get there early, never open the station until the driver was there to unload, and help calm the herd.

We all knew that D-Day was coming. We had watched newsreels of the buildup of men and materiel in England, and the whole world was holding its breath. June 6 dawned with a light overcast, and the papers were late. The carriers all arrived on time, and their horseplay aroused a sleeping neighbor. He threw up his window and

cursed us, but all he got for his trouble was catcalls. Rumors swirled: the newspaper building burned down, the truck had an accident, it was D-Day.

The youngest of the carriers was a lad named Roger. He was underage and thin, with a perpetually runny nose, and I wondered if he had conned his way into the job and hustled the paper route in order to feed himself. He was usually late, but today he was early and brought news. He'd been listening to shortwave radio and indeed the invasion was on. We were skeptical; he was known for tall tales.

We waited restively. Some of us had chores or other commitments after the paper route. I kept them there with the threat of losing their jobs. Short routes in the congested part of the city had plenty of aspirants.

Hours passed, and our district manager came by to tell us the papers would be late (as if we hadn't guessed) and, indeed, the invasion was on. A few customers came by to check on why they hadn't received their paper. We gave them the news, and a small crowd gathered.

Mid-morning the delivery truck roared up with bundles of papers showing the big, black headline "D-DAY." Pandemonium reigned as the driver and I fought to get the papers inside where they could be counted and parceled out. Carriers clamored for their allotments, and customers in the crowd tried to get their papers. The little shack was full to bursting, but eventually it all got sorted out.

When everyone was gone, I completed my twice-daily chore of rolling up the wire ties from the bundles, sweeping up, and burning the leftover wrappings from the bundles in a little sheet-metal stove. That was a welcome chore in winter, unpleasant duty in summer heat.

Soon after that our rented farm was sold, we moved to town, and I made another move upward in prestige and downward in remuneration. I quit the newspaper business and went into the grocery business after school and Saturdays. I took home \$4.50 a week on that job, but I had Sundays off and didn't have to be at work by 5 A.M. The relief was easily worth the weekly buck and a half I lost by making the shift.

I rarely saw my father those days. He worked nights, 10-hour shifts, 7-days a week. When I was home he was either sleep-

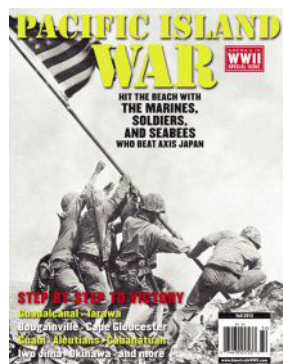


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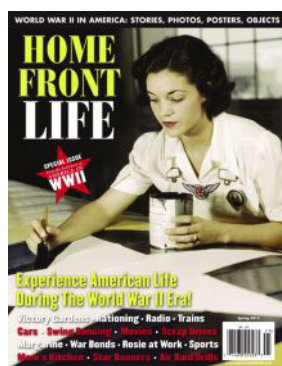
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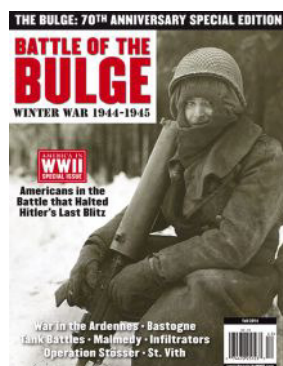
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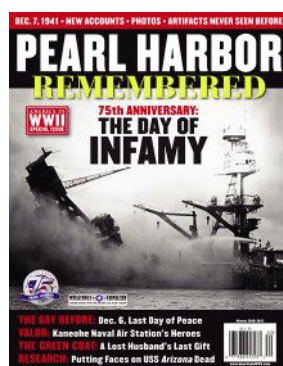
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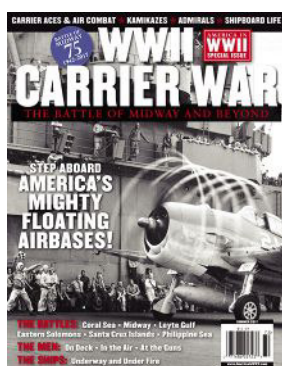
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ing or at work. In his dotage I sometimes saw him frown. He'd mumble, "70 hours a week, 80 cents an hour" and shake his head. Eighty cents an hour was not the wages of skilled labor even then, but my father had not gone past sixth grade and had been crippled by some disease in his youth. He always walked stiffly and suffered upper-body weakness. Nonetheless he had supported his family with hard physical labor until at last he retired at age 69, still working for the Honeywell Corporation.

The Battle of Midway broke the back of the Japanese offense, our own capability increased steadily, and we were advancing toward Japan. In Europe, in 1944, we had a solid foothold on the Continent. Still, the meat grinder that daily took more and more of our men's lives ground on, and we were not allowed to forget. One suburb had bravely erected a billboard with a star for each resident serving. The board became full. Smaller boards were erected flanking it, and they too filled up. Changes were made almost daily as blue stars were recolored silver to reflect men shipped overseas, and blue or silver stars were recolored gold to reflect the loss of men's lives. It was a daily changing record of the human cost.

## ★ I WAS THERE

America's spirits rose as battlefield success followed battlefield success, but in December 1944, the Germans attacked in the Battle of the Bulge. We experienced consternation at their rapid advance and the severe casualties we suffered, and some of us despaired of winning. The enemy was turned back by the end of January, though, and it was the Germans' last gasp. Victory in Europe was declared on May 8, 1945.

The war in the Pacific continued as our forces approached closer and closer to Japan. We suffered an ever-increasing loss of American lives as the Japanese bitterly contested every inch of territory, and the nation braced for unprecedented levels of casualties when we invaded the Japanese homeland. B-29 bombers under tough-minded warrior [Major] General Curtis LeMay decimated Japanese cities with fire-bombs, and then, on August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped, on

Hiroshima. The world took notice in horror, but there was no sign of quit in the Japanese. On August 9, the second nuclear bomb was dropped, on Nagasaki. Six days later, on August 15, Emperor Hirohito announced unconditional surrender, and the world rejoiced. The war was over.

After the celebrations there was sober reflection by the scientists who created the fearsome weapon, about the morality of what they had done. Yet today there is moralizing, often by people not yet born when the terrible weapon was unleashed. Those of us alive then, especially those whose lives might have been spared by use of that weapon, or who had suffered grievous personal losses at Japanese hands, have no problems. Fewer people died—Japanese, Americans, and our Allies—than would have died in an invasion of the Japanese homeland.

Lyman came home to resume his business career. Dorothy continued to wire ships until the shipyard closed, and then she resumed her housewifely duties. Jim commenced a career in the US Postal Service. At war's end Harold was stationed at an army hospital that converted to the Veterans Administration. He took off his

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uniform one Friday night, returned to work Monday morning in a civilian suit, and spent the rest of his career in civil service as the Veterans Administration's go-to guy whenever it opened a new hospital.

My father, still with Honeywell, began an easier work schedule, and my mother went back to her prewar routine. Myra worked her civilian job and continued to volunteer at the VA Hospital teaching writing to long-term patients, even after she retired, until she was no longer able. Susie continued to work building small, specialized transformers for military and civilian applications until she retired.

I graduated from high school in 1946 and enlisted in the army for 18 months to get GI Bill education benefits. After basic training, I was sent to Japan. There I met and married Elisabeth [who was born to Dutch parents in Indonesia when it was a colony of the Netherlands]. Though the shooting had ended a year before I entered service, I'm officially a veteran of World War II. I'm also a veteran of the Korean War; my 18 months of service stretched into seven years, five of them in the Far East.

Before I was discharged from the army in 1953, Elisabeth and I had two children. We had a third child as I was attending Denver University to study accounting. I got my bachelor's degree in 1956 and began a career in federal civil service that continued until the federal government downsizing early in the Jimmy Carter administration.

I served in the Colorado Air National Guard and then the US Coast Guard Reserve until the coast guard retired me as a lieutenant commander in 1989 after 42 years of total military service. I was slowed down by coronary artery disease in 1985. I'm still kicking, but slower, and not nearly as hard. I never became a fighter pilot. ★

ROY F. WILSON wrote the first draft of this memoir a couple of years ago after discovering an issue of *American in WWII* while volunteering at the Naval Undersea Museum in Keyport, Washington. He is co-author, with Elisabeth H. Wilson, of *Unplanned Odyssey: A Memoir of Wartime Survival, centered around Elisabeth's internment by invading Japanese in Indonesia, escape from captivity, and subsequent five years in Japan*. Elisabeth died in 2013 after 64 years of marriage to Roy, and he now lives in Bremerton, Washington, with his second wife, Estelle McNeice.

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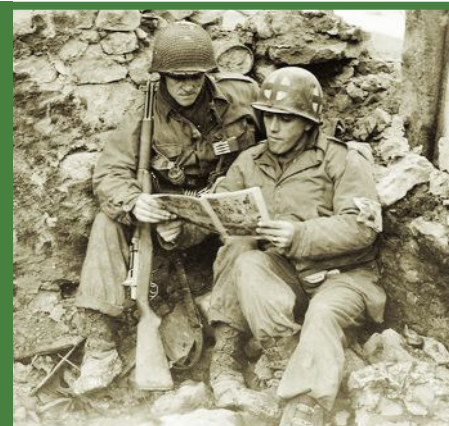
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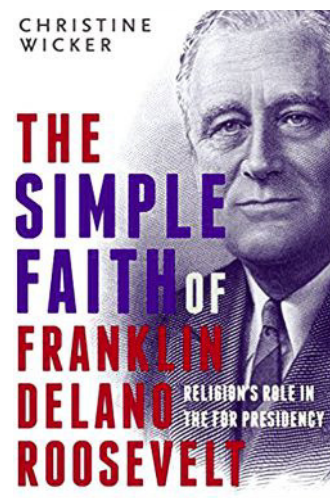
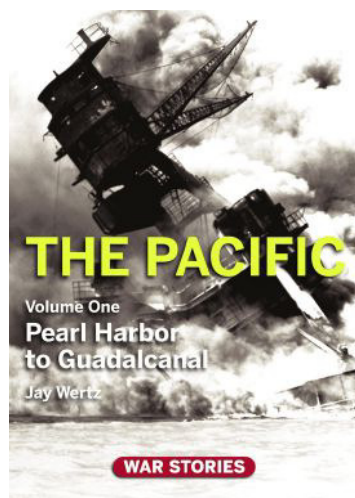
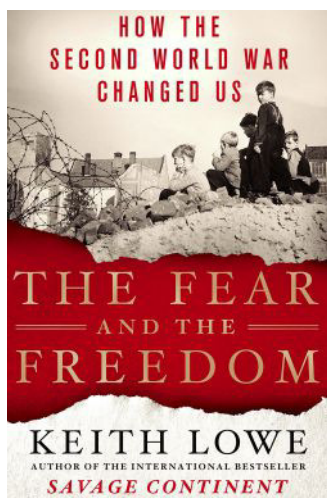
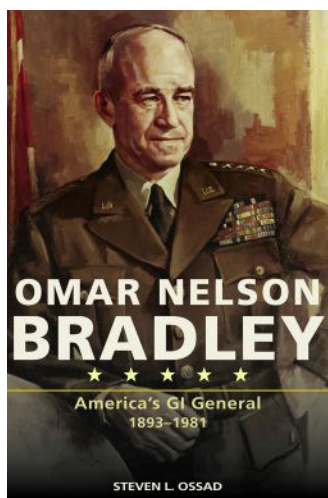
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**Omar Nelson Bradley:**  
**America's GI General, 1893–1981**  
*by Steven L. Ossad, University of Missouri Press, 490 pages, \$36.95*

THOSE WHO REMEMBER Omar Bradley recall a caricature, the modest, hard-working leader dubbed “the GI’s General,” argues Steven Ossad. Such perceptions, Ossad writes, have been shaped by the reputations of Bradley’s more celebrated superiors (Dwight Eisenhower) and subordinates (George Patton). Ossad’s new biography seeks a more three-dimensional understanding of Bradley as “the Great Tactician of the West,” and he brings new sources, such as the diary of Bradley’s British liaison, Major Thomas Bigland, to the task.

*Omar Nelson Bradley* is organized into three parts: Becoming a Commander (up to 1943), the Liberation of Europe (1944–1945), and Shaper of the Post-War World (1945–1981). A prologue recounts the 1913 Army-Navy baseball game when Cadet Bradley was thrown out trying to steal second base. Telling the story decades later, Bradley did not admit he’d made a judgment error. This incident, says Ossad, foreshadowed an inability to admit more serious

lapses of judgment as a commander.

Part one details Bradley’s hardscrabble upbringing in Missouri and his almost accidental admission to West Point. Bradley was a member of the class of 1915—“the class the stars fell on”—which produced 59 general officers, including Eisenhower. Ossad follows Bradley’s career from infantry lieutenant (he served stateside during World War I) through the succession of army schools necessary for advancement to the highest levels of command.

During the next 20 years Bradley crossed paths with officers who would become famous during the Second World War, most importantly George C. Marshall, with whom he served as an instructor at Fort Benning’s infantry school from 1929 to 1933 and as a colonel on the army’s general staff from 1939 to 1941. Ossad asserts, “President Roosevelt won World War II with a single appointment [Marshall as chief of staff] on the day it began.” Such hyperbole notwithstanding, Bradley’s career, like that of many future general officers, was shaped by his status as a protégé of Marshall.

Once the United States entered World War II, Bradley rose rapidly, commanding two divisions in training before being sent

to North Africa, after the debacle at Kasserine Pass in early 1943, to act as Eisenhower’s “eyes and ears.” In the Tunisia campaign Bradley served for the first time under Patton. Their relationship, according to Ossad, was more fraught than many accounts would have us believe. Bradley’s feelings toward Patton eventually degenerated into contempt. After a relatively brief stint as Patton’s deputy, Bradley took command of the II Corps and led it to victory in both Africa and Sicily. By late 1943 he was America’s most experienced corps commander and had begun to develop his low-key image with the press and the public.

The middle chapters deal with Bradley’s role in the planning and implementation of the D-Day landings on Normandy and his role as commander of the First Army and the Twelfth Army Group. Several episodes reveal the less attractive aspects of his character, presaged by the story of the Army-Navy baseball game. When the massive air bombardment designed to blast German defenses prior to D-Day resulted in hundreds of US casualties, Bradley did not take responsibility. He blamed Eighth Air Force commander Jimmy Doolittle and others even though he had insisted that his troops



remain closer to the bomb line than the air-men considered safe.

More serious was Bradley's "calculated gamble" to spread his forces too thin in the Ardennes prior to the German counter-attack in December 1944. Not wanting to appear panicked, Bradley refused to relocate his headquarters to facilitate communications with the First Army. He got angry and threatened to resign when Eisenhower gave British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery command of American forces north of the developing bulge. He never forgave Ike. The weeks of the Ardennes crisis revealed his insecurities at their worst.

The final chapters of the book paint a more positive portrait. After VE Day, Bradley was tapped to head the Veterans Administration. Despite fears that the job spelled the end of his military career, he performed in an exemplary manner, guiding the VA through a period of unprecedented growth and developing a close working relationship with President Harry Truman. He was rewarded with an appointment as chief of staff of the army, then an appointment as the first chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (he served during the critical first year of the Korean War), and finally a promotion to five-star general.

Ossad's book may not be the definitive biography of Omar Bradley that some desire, but Ossad has nonetheless performed a service by revealing a number of Bradley's more human traits. Because of this book, we have a fuller understanding of this particular famous soldier's story.

KEN S. MUELLER  
Lafayette, Indiana

### **The Fear and the Freedom: How the Second World War Changed Us**

by Keith Lowe, St. Martin's Press,  
561 pages, \$29.99

**K**EITH LOWE'S UNUSUAL, innovative *The Fear and the Freedom* covers not the Second World War but its fallout: the myriad social and political trends that it engendered and that formed our postwar world. Lowe anchors his book in more than 20 personal narratives, ranging in origin from a concentration camp survivor to a Manhattan Project scientist. Each is the focus of a chapter. Some are predictable;

others are not. Most are unfamiliar figures, often advocating positions wholly bypassed by history.

Some readers will find *The Fear and the Freedom* annoying. It consciously skews left and seeks to de-mythologize (or, alternately, mythologize) major elements of the war. Sometimes this is merely tedious, as with the exploration of looting by Allied troops (little is reported about the industrial-scale Soviet looting throughout Europe and Asia). Elsewhere it is truly astonishing, as when Lowe quotes a Japanese memoirist asserting that the atomic bomb was a gift from God(!). However, even when I strongly disagreed with Lowe, I found his book fascinating and unexpected, if occasionally uneven.

The chapter "World Economy" is an example of Lowe at his best. He surveys the economic turmoil of the war and subsequent years—both winners and losers were bankrupted—with only the United States and a few of its allies (not including Britain) emerging strong. This was not mere luck. At the 1944 Bretton Woods conference, America's agenda prevailed in designing the new world economic order, including the establishment of the International Monetary Fund. Thus, while American forces churned their way across Europe and the Pacific, American financial warriors wielded power of a different type to achieve economic victory. Postwar innovations such as the Marshall Plan further cemented US preeminence. The farsightedness and strategic vision that informed American planning have few equals.

"Freedom and Belonging" is one of the most unusual chapters. Lowe argues that in the aftermath of the war, philosophies such as Existentialism flourished because they gave direction to a world whose trust in religion, politics, and culture had been annihilated. Many people felt mentally and spiritually displaced. Paradoxically, this global moment that had reclaimed freedom now engendered paralysis. Communal beliefs that emphasized common cause to fill empty hands and hearts superseded traditional faiths. For most *America in WWII* readers, this is a far cry from what's expected in books about the war years! Yet on reflection, this helps me better understand some of the unique wartime spirit and how it persisted past 1945.

"Outcasts," one of the last chapters, is one of the more interesting. It covers the tsunami of refugees, both Axis and Allied, that swept over the world after the war. Some were luckless minorities expelled from liberated countries, as in Central and Eastern Europe. Others were repatriates from aggressor nations, as in Germany and Japan. A third group was Europeans despondently repatriating in the twilight of colonial regimes. Few in any group found much joy in their homelands, even in the victor nations, and some grievances (those of Koreans in Japan, for example) persist to this day. Lowe well captures the bleak chaos, loss, and injustice of these transnational movements.

Frankly, much of the period's political struggle is very well known; the innovation is Lowe's anchoring device of personal narratives. One major exception is the birth of Indonesia. After years of brutal Japanese occupation and anti-Western propaganda, Japan's population resisted the return of the Dutch, aided by the British, to their colony. Tensions escalated, the Japanese garrison (still armed after the surrender) failed to contain protests, riots ensued, Indian soldiers were killed, and the British launched air strikes, bombing and strafing the locals. This proved fruitless and within a few years the disillusioned Europeans withdrew from here and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. This quite unexpected legacy of World War II will interest readers more than the rehashing of the Cold War.

Not all of the book's chapters are intense and focused. An exploration of Latin America seems only distantly related to the ostensible theme; its tale of coups and dictators could have been taken from last year's newspapers. One chapter morphs from a Ukrainian woman's wartime misery to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Another, on transnational government, jams in everything from the formation of the European Union to Brexit—and to a Polish WWII museum! To say these are only distantly connected is an understatement.

*The Fear and the Freedom* is at its best when reminding us of the political and spiritual and intellectual chaos after the war, a time when the world was rife with countless possibilities. While each combatant society had committed its best and

brightest to winning the conflict, none predicted how it would play out, and only a very few planned for the postwar world. It reminds us that the only thing more difficult to manage than war is peace.

THOMAS MULLEN  
Flemington, New Jersey

**War Stories: World War II Firsthand**  
*Series by Jay Wertz, Monroe Publications,*  
256 336 pages per volume, \$39.95 each

THE USE OF oral history from people who witnessed or participated in significant events has been considered acceptable, even very valuable, to historical research for many years. Oral histories can lead to a broader understanding and a clearer perspective of events, though there can be drawbacks. Memories can fade over time, and two people can have very different recollections. However, when weighing the pros and cons of these firsthand accounts, they prove worthwhile. The biggest problem is that time moves for

ward. If historians do not work fast enough to collect and catalog firsthand histories, the insight is lost forever.

In the book series *War Stories: World War II Firsthand*, author Jay Wertz (a contributing editor of *America in WWII*) uses oral history creatively and judiciously. He has personally amassed hundreds of oral histories and incorporated them in his writing, but the best part of his series is that he does not overwhelm the reader with these accounts. His books have a significant amount of concise historical narrative with a measured placement of oral history to provide maximum benefit to the reader.

Another unusual feature of Wertz's firsthand accounts is their breadth and scope. He includes war stories not only from soldiers and marines, the so called "foxhole-level view," but also from paratroopers,

airmen, medical personnel, and civilians. There are stories from the Allied and the Axis side; to fully understand the Pacific and European theaters of the war, it is imperative to understand the view from America's former enemies.

The first book in the series is *The Pacific: Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*. One of the best features of this book is the first chapter, "Prelude to War." This chapter provides a very good background on Japan's entrance onto the international stage and its growth and development into an Asian power. It details Japan's brutal aggression in Asia. We Americans tend to think that the Pacific war started on December 7, 1941, with the attack on Pearl Harbor. "Prelude to War" shows the true length of the fighting in that theater, and its horrors.

The second book is *D-Day: The Campaign across France*. This volume does not follow in close chronology from the first. However, Wertz heard so much demand for firsthand war stories from D-Day that

## ★ THEATER OF WAR

### Catharsis

THE NATURE OF WAR makes bloodshed, destruction, and killing unavoidable. So the study of war is essentially a serious endeavor. As with other tragic events in the human experience, however, there is humor to be found. Humor evokes laughter, which can act as a stress reliever. Humorous memories of deceased persons are fondly related in eulogies. Satire stretches humor, combining comedy and controversy in a nearly equal mix. I've decided to use this issue's column as a short survey of four very funny WWII films. Space limitations prevent me from giving thorough synopses of them, but I hope that readers will seek out opportunities to enjoy them in one of the many forms in which they may currently be available.

All these films come from one of the most prolific periods of hit comedies in Hollywood history, the 1960s. Great writing, intelligent direction, and inspired performances led to sophisticated

romantic and action comedies that had audiences in stitches. Most critics, at the time of the movies' premieres and afterwards, accepted their contribution to American cinema. They were technically polished, and whatever factual flaws they contained were negligible. WWII veterans often acted as advisors, and many people working on the films were also making war *dramas*. And the films were believable without the benefit of computer generated imagery, which is important to recognize.

Cary Grant was already a Hollywood superstar when he took on the role of Walter Eckland in *Father Goose* (1964). A hard-drinking American on a South Pacific island, he's reluctantly convinced to spot planes for the Allies. His easy life is further complicated when teacher Catherine Frenau (Leslie Caron) and her seven young female students enter it as they flee the Japanese. The crisp dialogue and interplay between these diverse characters is captivating.

A few years earlier, Grant had teamed with Blake Edwards in *Operation Petticoat* (1959). The fictional story pieced

from actual WWII events finds Grant, as Lieutenant Commander Matt Sherman, commanding a damaged submarine escaping the Philippines. Circumstances lead Sherman to sea with the sub painted in pink primer and with the addition of five stranded women army nurses to the ship's complement. Sherman's determined captain is counterbalanced by real life WWII submariner Tony Curtis playing a conniving second officer. The witty dialogue and suggested sexuality, which was acceptable at the time, are complemented by well-staged scenes on the submarine.

Another Blake Edwards comedy, *"What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?"* (1966), is one of his best. Great casting and characterizations make this spoof of an American platoon advancing on a village, defended by Italian soldiers who would rather party than fight, a feast of hijinks and slapstick action. A fake battle is staged to fool Allied aerial reconnaissance. The ruse works until a US intelligence officer and then the Germans arrive. The cast is filled with wonderful comedy actors, such as Carroll



he decided to skip ahead in time. The book covers the planning and preparation for Operation Overlord and concludes with the Liberation of Paris. The section “The British and Commonwealth Beaches,” including Sword, Juno, and Gold beaches, was fascinating. Most books on the Normandy landings focus only on the American beaches—Omaha and Utah.

Third in the series is *The Pacific: The Solomons to Saipan*. The book resumes the chronology in the Pacific theater set by the

first book in the series. It details the violent naval and ground fighting in the vast theater with gripping historical narrative and oral histories. Books on the Pacific theater tend to focus on the early and later fighting, neglecting this middle period. But this is when the United States learned to master the craft of naval, aviation, and island fighting with improvements in military hardware and technology.

The series’ fourth and most recent book is *The World Turns to War*, published in September 2017. It begins with the end of World War I and the failure of postwar settlements and covers the rise of fascism, the invasion of Poland, and the German Blitzkrieg. Unfortunately, the United States elected to pursue an isolationist policy, which contributed to the collapse of the agreements. To fully understand the causes of World War II, it is necessary to review and understand the timeframe in this book from the November 11, 1918, armistice to the Nazi consolidation of power in Germany in the 1930s. A section in the book called “The Dunkirk Evacuation” is especially relevant today with the recent release of the movie *Dunkirk*. The German Luftwaffe thought it could destroy the trapped Allies without the assistance of the panzers. The Allies were able to evacuate 338,226 troops in a little over a week, and they lived to fight another day.

The current plan for War Stories: World War II Firsthand is to have 12 volumes completed by 2020. This means that 2 or 3 will need to be published each year. This is an aggressive goal, but the outcome will be well worth it. These books are a skillfully crafted blend of historical narrative with relevant and enlightening oral history.

DENNIS EDWARD FLAKE  
Hummelstown, Pennsylvania

**The Simple Faith of  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt:  
Religion’s Role in the FDR Presidency**  
by Christine Wicker, *Smithsonian Books*,  
232 pages, \$24.95

**I**N *THE SIMPLE FAITH* of Franklin Delano Roosevelt: *Religion’s Role in the FDR Presidency*, Christine Wicker’s intent is pretty clear-cut. She argues convincingly that the many humanitarian policies initiated during FDR’s presidency (four terms

dating from 1933 until his death on April 12, 1945) stem directly from his Christian faith. Yet for anyone familiar with FDR’s backroom method of governing, his wily statesmanship, or his personal failings, namely his marital infidelity, this would seem unlikely.

Wicker builds her argument from the beginning and relates how life in the Roosevelt household was guided by the adage “To whom much is given, much is expected.” And while young Franklin led a sheltered, privileged childhood, he understood that his was not the usual American experience.

In 1896, at age 14, a year later than typical, Roosevelt entered Groton School in Massachusetts. His delayed entry and isolated upbringing made those early years at the boys boarding school difficult—he experienced life as an outsider for the first time. There he met the Reverend Endicott Peabody, the Episcopal priest who founded the school with the intent of instilling high-minded, Biblical principles in children of the wealthiest Americans. Wicker argues that Roosevelt’s experience at the school and interaction with Peabody continued to shape his ideals for the remainder of his life.

From that point on in the book, Wicker doesn’t spend a lot of time chronicling Roosevelt’s life; instead she looks at isolated events and becomes most convincing when she ties what FDR said to what he did. During his first term he said, “The Great Teacher [Jesus] said, ‘come that ye may have life and that ye may have it more abundantly.’ The object of all our striving should be to realize that ‘abundant life.’” For Roosevelt, a true democrat, he meant abundant life for everyone.

Elected during the Great Depression, Roosevelt quickly went to work realizing that objective. During his first hundred days he initiated sweeping relief and recovery programs for the most vulnerable. The Tennessee Valley Authority was established to control flooding and create inexpensive electricity for an economically struggling region. Three years later the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 paved the way for electricity to reach the most far-flung and poorest communities in the nation. The Securities and Exchange Commission was established in 1934 to regulate Wall Street



O’Connor, who later become stars of TV comedy. (O’Connor would play Archie Bunker in *All in the Family*.)

My favorite of these films, and one I never tire of seeing, is *The Wackiest Ship in the Army* (1960). Jack Lemmon is at his deadpan best as Lieutenant Rip Crandall, a former champion yachtsman who is convinced to take command of a decrepit schooner and its misfit crew. They are sent deep into Japanese-held waters to rescue a coast watcher and gain valuable information. It’s a great mix of comedy and WWII action.

All these movies are funny and fun. Also important, they led to Hollywood making darker satires such as *Catch 22* in 1970.

JAY WERTZ  
Phillips Ranch, California

in an effort to prevent future depressions, and the Social Security Act of 1935, part of the New Deal, provided income to Americans who were too old to work and unemployment payments to those who had lost their jobs. The Works Progress Administration of 1935 also fell under New Deal programs and provided jobs for unemployed people suffering from the Depression.

Additionally, FDR's labor legislation "changed America from a country where employers could legally work men, women, and children for any wage they liked for as long as they liked and in conditions as inhumane and as dangerous as they liked." Accordingly, the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act established the first national minimum wage and restricted child labor. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or the GI Bill, provided veterans with a range of benefits, including a college education; it arguably helped create the middle class, the backbone of the American

economy. Wicker also notes that the New Deal took the first tentative steps toward the Civil Rights movement.

All this leaves little doubt that legislation passed during the FDR presidency did change life for the most vulnerable Americans in ways that have endured. He "made the federal government a powerful instrument of social justice and equality." As his wife, Eleanor, said, "Throughout the whole of Franklin's career there never was any deviation from his original objective—to help make life better for the average man, woman, and child."

In a speech after his second election, FDR said, "We are beginning to wipe out the line that divides the practical from the ideal; and in so doing we are fashioning an

instrument of unimagined power for the establishment of a morally better world.... We are beginning to abandon our tolerance of the abuse of power by those who betray for profit the elementary decencies of life. In this process, evil things formerly accepted will not be so easily condoned. Hard-headedness will not so easily excuse hard-heartedness."

Wicker argues that FDR's actions coupled with these kinds of speeches rule out noblesse oblige, social gospel, and progressivism as his motivations. Instead, we see social revolution of the sort depicted in the New Testament. Wicker says FDR had a "literal, unreflective" Christianity, and she admits he wasn't perfect. There was a fair amount to criticize about Roosevelt, yet "all of the ways he failed to be a good Christian didn't keep him from being an effective Christian."

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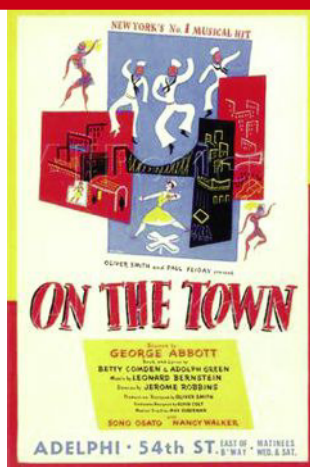
## A Helluva Tune

**W**HEN YOU THINK OF musical tributes to the most exciting city in the world, you think "New York, New York," famously turned to gold by a mature Frank Sinatra. But that one's as much about the narrator as the place: "I want to wake up in a city that doesn't sleep / And I'm king of the hill, top of the heap." Three decades earlier, in 1944, a new Broadway musical's theme song proclaimed, "New York, New York, a helluva town." Here, the city was the star.

*On the Town* was that musical, an extravaganza that paved career paths for three twenty-something creators: composer Leonard Bernstein and writers Adolph Green and Betty Comden. It was the story of three US Navy sailors who had never seen the concrete jungle and were turned loose from their ship at the Brooklyn Navy Yard for 24 hours' leave. The war is never mentioned, but the boys are clearly living it up one final day before shipping overseas.

Leonard Bernstein was enjoying a career on the upswing after temporarily replacing Bruno Walter as conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Then he composed the ballet *Fancy Free*, with Comden handling the words about those three seamen out on the town. Producers persuaded the creators to repurpose the work for Broadway.

The musical came together in five months, a helluva time for the creators. Green and Bernstein both crashed in hospital beds,



Green requiring a tonsillectomy and Bernstein a repair of a deviated septum that inhibited breathing. "The show is a wild monster now which doesn't let me sleep or eat or anything....," Bernstein later said.

Bernstein composed the music aboard a train on tour. The process, sans piano, was intense, as Halina Rodzinski, wife of conductor Artur Rodzinski, attested after witnessing one of Bernstein's rail-bound creative flurries earlier that year. "I pretended not to watch, but was amazed at the speed with which he covered sheet after sheet, rarely pausing or making an erasure," she wrote.

The show opened on December 28 with "New York, New York" setting the tone. Critics were impressed. "*On the Town* brought a whole new style, technique, and tempo to New York," wrote Olin Downes of the *New York Times*. The book may have been B-level, but the music elevated the whole.

The theme song was the show's closest thing to a hit. The first recording to test the market was a selection of tunes by the original cast along with the singer-actress Mary Martin. Highlighted by "New York, New York," the collection could have sold more with better orchestration.

"New York, New York" eventually became a minor classic, while Bernstein moved on to bigger endeavors, despite early misgivings: "*On the Town* was probably the last exciting thing I will do—it took nearly ten years from my life."

CARL ZEBROWSKI  
editor of *America in WWII*



★  
WWII  
EVENTS

**CALIFORNIA** • Through May 20, San Francisco: Artists' Eyes: Art of Incarceration. Multigenerational art exhibit commemorating the 75th anniversary of the 1943 internment of Japanese Americans. Monday–Friday, noon–5 P.M. National Japanese American Historical Society Peace Gallery. 415-921-5007. [www.njahs.org](http://www.njahs.org)

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA** • Feb. 15: Saints and Liars: American Relief and Rescue Workers during the Nazi Era. Lecture on the history and legacy of American relief workers overseas during World War II. Presented by Debórah Dwork. 7 P.M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 202-488-0460. [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

**FLORIDA** • Jan. 19–21, Fort Lauderdale: Wings of Freedom Tour. Walk-through tour of operational WWII-era planes. Flights and flight training aboard a B-17, B-24, or B-25 available (registration required). Presented by the Collings Foundation. 2 P.M. Friday–4 P.M. Sunday. Banyan Pilot Shop. 978-562-9182. [www.collingsfoundation.org](http://www.collingsfoundation.org)

Feb. 11–May 6, Dania Beach: State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda. Special exhibit exploring the influence of Nazi propaganda in WWII-era Germany. Advance registration requested. Monday–Friday, 9 A.M.–5 P.M. Holocaust Documentation and Education Center. 954-929-5690. [www.hdec.org](http://www.hdec.org)

**LOUISIANA** • Jan. 18, New Orleans: Documentary screening. Reception with filmmaker Pat Mire and screening of his documentary *Mon Cher Camarade*, about French-speaking Cajun US soldiers in World War II. Presented by the Alta and John Franks Foundation with the National WWII Museum. 5–8 P.M. National WWII Museum. 504-528-1944. [www.nationalww2museum.org](http://www.nationalww2museum.org)

Feb. 24, New Orleans: 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Kasserine Pass Symposium: Learning the Hard Lessons of War. Lectures and roundtable discussions with historians, authors, and military instructors on the impact of the 1943 battle of Kasserine Pass, Tunisia, on the young WWII US Army. 9 A.M.–6 P.M. National WWII Museum. 504-528-1944. [www.nationalww2museum.org](http://www.nationalww2museum.org)

**MINNESOTA** • Jan. 11, St. Paul: What Really Happened at Stalingrad. Roundtable discussion with author Jonathon House and Soviet WWII veterans. Presented by the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table with the Minnesota Historical Society. 7–9 P.M. Historic Fort Snelling. 612-726-1171. [www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)

**MISSOURI** • Jan. 12–14, Nevada: Battle of the Bulge Weekend. Living history weekend with Battle of the Bulge reenactment. Vendors, USO club, period music. Advance registration requested. 2 P.M. Friday–8 A.M. Sunday. Camp Clark. 913-682-8603. [www.137thinfantry.us](http://www.137thinfantry.us)

**TEXAS** • Jan. 20, Fredericksburg: Anchors Aweigh: Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, and Marines of WWII. Exhibits, games, and activities for children about the US armed forces that served during World War II. Presented by the Nimitz Junior Corps with the National Museum of the Pacific War. Advance registration required. 1–5 P.M. National Museum of the Pacific War. 830-997-8700, ext. 225. [www.pacificwarmuseum.org](http://www.pacificwarmuseum.org)

Feb. 9–June 3, Fredericksburg: USS *Texas*: The Last Dreadnought. Special exhibition of artifacts, photographs, and memories from crew members of the USS *Texas* (BB-35). Presented by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department with the National Museum of the Pacific War. 9 A.M.–5 P.M. daily. National Museum of the Pacific War. 830-997-8600. [www.pacificwarmuseum.org](http://www.pacificwarmuseum.org)

Please call the numbers provided or visit websites to check on dates, times, locations, and other information before planning trips.

COMING SOON



USS *Borie* (above) sunk its share of U-boats, but finally *U-405* exacted a price.

## PIG BOAT HUNTER

All seemed well to USS *Borie*'s captain on Halloween 1943: "Scratch one pig boat; am searching for more."

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# Germans Off Cape May!



Robert Whaley served on *LST-496*, the landing ship, tank, shown in the background here as a sister LST is being loaded during the practice run for D-Day known as Exercise Tiger.

**R**OBERT WHALEY DIDN'T HAVE TO TRAVEL FAR to encounter the war. The 17-year-old left his Delaware home in 1943 to join other enlistees for basic training in Cape May, New Jersey, at the mouth of the Delaware River. Some nights, after a long day of training and physical conditioning, he and other future sailors worked overtime removing debris that washed up on the beaches—debris from Allied merchant ships destroyed offshore by German U-boats. The war was that close.

After boot camp, Whaley went aboard USS *LST-496* (a landing ship, tank) and sailed south to the Gulf of Mexico and then to Europe. Whaley and his shipmates would be part of the Allied Normandy invasion, taking the war to France's Nazi German occupiers.

In April 1944, *LST-496* took part in Exercise Tiger at Slapton Sands in Devon, England. It was a top-secret rehearsal for the Normandy D-Day, with nine LSTs carrying more than 30,000 troops. But German E-boats—fast attack craft—discovered the convoy and launched torpedoes. *LST-496* was unharmed, but two other LSTs sank, and two more were damaged; 749 servicemen

died. To safeguard morale and keep the Germans from discovering the coming invasion, the Exercise Tiger incident was top-secret. To speak of it meant certain arrest.

Whaley and *LST-496* went on to deliver soldiers and supplies to Omaha Beach to support the D-Day invasion. After five days, on June 11, *LST-496* was dodging a torpedo when she hit a mine and sank. The crew was forced to abandon ship. "We suffered 75 percent casualties, lost or wounded men, and all vehicles," Whaley said. He himself was among the wounded; he received the Purple Heart. Reassigned, he dodged more torpedoes aboard another LST, escorting ships and boats across the English Channel until the war's end.

These days, when asked about the war Whaley replies, "I have that damned disease. Sometimes I forget who I am." What he does remember is this: "The Germans were off the coast of Cape May." ☆

*Submitted by PAUL DORSEY of Wilmington, Delaware, a friend of Robert Whaley.*

Send your GIs photo and story to [editor@americainwwii.com](mailto:editor@americainwwii.com) or to GIs, America in WWII, 4711 Queen Ave., Ste. 202, Harrisburg, PA 17109





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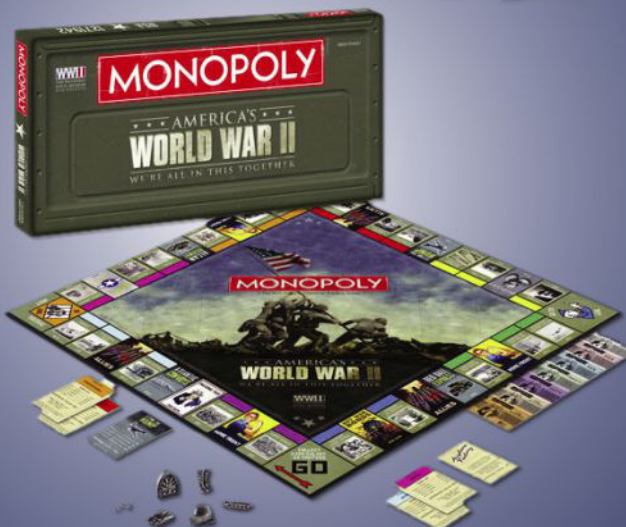
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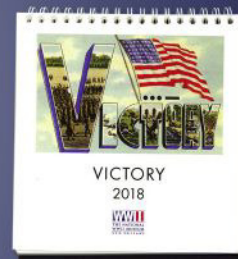
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